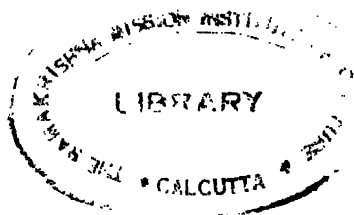


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VEDANTA DARPANA

OR
MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—o0o—

*"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"*

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*



Vol. I.

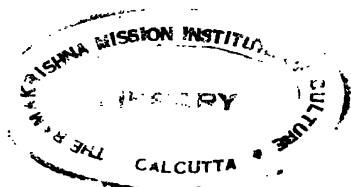
JANUARY, 1931

No. 1

VEDIC PRAYERS

"May Mitra, who presides over the day; Varuna, who governs the night; Aryama, the regent of the Sun and of Light; Indra, who gives strength; Vrihaspati who rules speech and understanding, and Vishnu, whose step is vast, grant us ease! I bow to Brahma. Salutations unto thee O Vayu! Even thou art Brahman present to our apprehension. Thee I will call 'Present Brahman'. Thee I will name 'The Right One'. Thee I will pronounce 'The True One'. May that Universal Brahman preserve me! May That preserve the teacher! Propitious be it!"

"May we hear His Divine Voice with our ears! May we see His blessed Form with our eyes! May we feel His Divine Presence with our body! May we live His Eternal Life Divine! May all the Gods—Indra, Pusha, Vrihaspati, etc., and all the forces of Nature—help our spiritual growth! Peace be to all!"



"May good betide all people! May all sovereigns rule the Earth in the righteous paths! May prosperity ever reign over the land for the benefit of all creatures! May all live in peace and happiness! Om Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

On Harmony of Religions

The light of the gas lamp illumines the different parts of the town with varying intensity, but all the lamps receive their supply of gas from one common source; similarly, the religious teachers of all countries and times receive their inspiration from one Almighty source.

As one can ascend to the roof of a house by means of a ladder, or a rope, or a staircase, or in various other ways, so, diverse are the ways and means to approach God. Each religion is one of the ways to reach Him.

There is but one God, but endless are His names and endless the aspects in which He may be regarded. Call Him by any name and worship Him in any aspect that pleases you, you are sure to see Him.

A mother loves all her children equally, but she so arranges the food for them that everyone gets what agrees with him. Similarly, the Lord has provided different forms of worship to suit different men with different capacities and in different stages of spiritual development.

The Being is the same, only the names are different. For instance, one and the same substance, water, is called

by different names by different peoples in different countries. In Bengali the substance is called Jala, in Hindi Pani, in English water or aqua. It is only owing to the ignorance of one another's language that people do not understand one another; otherwise there could not be any misunderstanding.

ASPECTS OF THE VEDANTA

From an Address by Swami Vivekananda

Two worlds there are in which we live, one the external, the other the internal. Human progress has been, from times of yore, almost in parallel lines along both these worlds. The search began in the external, and man at first wanted to get answers for all the deep problems from outside nature. Man wanted to satisfy his thirst for the beautiful and the sublime from all that surrounded him; man wanted to express himself and all that was within him in the language of the concrete; and grand indeed were the answers, most marvelous ideas of God and worship, most rapturous expressions of the beautiful. Sublime ideas came from the external world indeed. But the other, opening out for humanity later, laid out before him a universe yet sublimer, yet more beautiful, and infinitely more expansive. In the Karmakanda portion of the Vedas we find the most wonderful ideas of religion inculcated, we find the most wonderful ideas about an over-ruling Creator, Preserver and Destroyer and this universe presented before

us in language sometimes the most soul-stirring. Most of you perhaps remember that most wonderful sloka in the Rig Veda Samhita where you get the description of chaos, perhaps the sublimest that has ever been attempted yet. In spite of all this we find that yet it is gross, that something of matter yet clings on to it. Yet we find that it is only the expression of the Infinite in the language of matter, in the language of the finite, it is the infinite of the muscles and not of the mind. It is the infinite of space and not of thought. Therefore in the second portion, or Jnana-kanda we find there is altogether a different procedure. The first was to search out from external nature the truths of the universe. The first attempt was to get the solution of all the deep problems of life from the material world. 'Yasyaite Himavanto mahitwa.'

"Whose glory these Himalayas declare." This is a grand idea, but yet it was not grand enough for India. The Indian mind had to fall back—and the research took a different direction altogether from the external, the search came into the internal, from matter into the mind. There arose the cry "when a man dies, what becomes of him?" 'Astityeke nayamastiti chaikē, etc.'

"Some say that he exists, others that he is gone; say Oh king of Death, what is truth?" An entirely different procedure we find here. The Indian mind got what was to be got from the external world, but it did not feel satisfied with that; it wanted to search more, to dig in its own interior, to seek from its own soul, and the answer came.

The Upanishads, or the Vedanta, or the Aranyakas, or *Ragasya*, is the name of this portion of the Vedas. Here we find at once that religion has got rid of all external formalities. Here we find at once not that spiritual things are told in the language of matter, but that spirituality is preached in the language of the spirit, the *sublime* in the language of the *superfine*. No more any *grossness* attaches to it, no more is there any compromise with things that concern us. Bold, brave, beyond our conception of the present day, stand the giant minds of the sages of the Upanishads, declaring the noblest truths that have ever been preached unto humanity, without any compromise, without any fear. This, my countrymen, I want to lay before you. Even the *Jnana-kanda* of the Vedas is a vast ocean; many lives are necessary to understand even the least bit of it. Truly has it been said of the Upanishads by Ramanuja that the Vedanta is the head, the shoulders, the crested form of the Vedas, and surely enough it has become the Bible of modern India. The Hindus have the greatest respect for the *Karma-kanda* of the Vedas, but, for all practical purposes, we know that for ages by *Sruti* has been meant the Upanishads and the Upanishads alone. We know that all our great Philosophers, either *Vyasa*, or *Isanajali*, or *Gautama*, or even the great father of all philosophy, the great *Kapila* himself, wherever they wanted an authority for what they wrote, from the Upanishads every one of them got it and nowhere else, for it is therein that are the truths that remain for ever.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE — A COMMENT

By Swami Devatmananda

An analytical study into the origin of religious belief which later developed into modern theology shows that deeper below the emotion of fear of natural phenomena, or the search after a Benevolent Guide or Comforter, there was undoubtedly an undercurrent or subconscious idea in the mind of man regarding the apprehension of losing this human existence, and the consequent loss of all the charms of life: else even the primitive man had no necessity in conceiving of a higher and more stable life hereafter. It is clear then, that when an 'individual feels the vanity of human desires and aims', he seeks refuge in religion. But as matters stand, there are numerous religions with numerous creeds and doctrines, and equally claimed to be revealed truths. Thus man gets confused in his choice in religious life.

Professor Einstein, in his article on Religion and Science, speaks of a religious experience called the 'cosmic religious sense' which is the outcome of the feeling of 'the individual destiny as an imprisonment' and thus man 'seeks to experience the totality of existence as a unity full of significance.' This undoubtedly transcends all the limitations of doctrines and dogmas of religious churchianity. But Mr. Einstein does not make clear what sort of experience that is. Is it an intellectual conception or the experience of a feeling? If it be the former, it can not have any abiding value with us, for

it will be but temporary. If it be the latter, is it a feeling of embodiedness or disembodiedness? If the cosmic sense be an experience of embodiedness, our feeling as parts of a universal totality of matter will be the result, for man is *apparently* a material entity. If again, the experience is related to disembodiedness, certainly it will pertain to that which is not matter: it must be an experience of, and as, a spiritual entity, and unless we are spirit by nature we cannot have the disembodied experience of the totality of a cosmic sense.

But Mr. Einstein maintains that scientists in the course of scientific researches get a glimpse of that 'cosmic sense' which is the driving force that works behind the tremendous exertions that are put forth by them. Indeed it is noble and grand to conceive of such an experience and the feeling of unbounded joy and ecstatic thrill resulted therefrom. But what positive good does it bring to man after all? The scientific discoveries do surely benefit mankind in so many ways: but how does this ecstatic thrill differ from what a King Midas obtains when he so voluptuously peers into his coffer of gold? Or from that devilish rapture a man-slayer is lost in when he dances in a pool of blood? Is it not a matter of degree alone? Are not the experiences of emotions of the same heart? In one case it is perverted perhaps and in another, it is properly directed. In fact, the whole difference lies in refinement of culture and superior taste. The same argument holds good in the case of poets and artists, too. Secondly, all emotional feelings, however sublime they may be, differ widely according to the

differences in mental make-up of the individuals and thus there is no chance for a common standard of truth to be arrived at. Lastly, they pertain to the material part of man and with all his efforts he cannot make his senses carry him beyond the domain of the phenomenal universe.

The most vital point to be considered then, is whether or not this experience of a cosmic sense in the pursuit of scientific researches affects man materially and permanently in his struggle towards the evolution of a higher life. Man takes refuge in religion to obtain what he cannot expect to have from this world of sense-perception. In one word, he seeks something that is immaterial. But if man in his essential nature be material, he cannot expect to survive physical dissolution to enjoy what is non-material, and all religions will then fall to the ground.

Further, when Mr. Einstein states that 'man's plight would indeed be sad if he had to be kept in order through fear of punishment and hope of rewards after death', he is too right. Surely man's plight has been made terribly sad, for he has been kept in order through fear of punishment etc., for a time beyond his patience. And now that he has lost all such fears and attractions for tempting rewards, he is quite free to choose his own way. But the Professor suggests that the ethical behavior of man is better based on sympathy, education and social relationships, and requires no support from religion. Indeed the sentiments expressed in this suggestion are noble: but as a scientist he ought to have given the answer to that great query "Why should a man be ethical in his behaviour

towards others? Why should he be virtuous, pious and honest instead of being just the opposite to serve his immediate interests alone?" These fundamental problems have to be satisfactorily solved before man should be asked to be moral and religious.

In fine, to make the story short, any amount of ecstatic joy following an experience by the subject, of the cosmic religious sense cannot but be limited, short and temporary. It cannot be expected to be eternal and permanent, being sense-experience. If religious life means an eternal life of beatific reality, it cannot possibly accrue from matter. That which is bound and mortal can never become free and immortal; that which is dead and inert can never attain Self-conscious state of beatitude. Thus, the Eternal state of Spiritual Bliss does not consist in its conative, or emotional comprehension: but it is in Being and Becoming: it is in Life and Living. Man is *essentially* a spiritual entity and he has to realize his spiritual unity in a superconscious state. With the help of intuitive vision he realizes his own spiritual Self as the Immanent and Transcendent Reality which alone supplies the key to the solution of all the ethical and spiritual problems of life. No amount of outside imposition of laws and moral dictates can make man good and virtuous: these are surely arbitrary and bound to fail in bringing about the desired result, as the present state of society amply testifies. Unless man responds voluntarily from within, he cannot be made moral and spiritual. And if he desires to taste the immortal bliss of a moral and spiritual life, in and through all the ac-

tivities of his daily life here and hereafter, he must recognize and realize the One homogeneous and Spiritual Divinity of which he is a part and a manifestation. He can do this either through the insight gained in scientific researches, or through an ecstatic fervour of poetic vision, or again by the moral disciplines of a spiritual life. They are only different paths leading to the same Goal, in way of helping man in overcoming the consciousness of the material nature of his being, and realizing what is Spirit and Transcendent.

WHAT IS VEDANTA?

By Swami Bodhananda

Vedanta is the name of the Religious Philosophy of the Indo-Aryans. The Vedas are the Scriptures of this branch of the Aryan Race and Vedanta is the philosophy of the Vedas. Literally it means the "End of Knowledge".

By the word Veda no particular Bible or book is meant. This word is derived from the root *Vid*—to know. The Vedas are the records of the spiritual revelations of the Aryan sages. The Revealers of the Vedas are called *Rishis*—seers of Truth. They saw the Truth by introspection and meditation and expressed it spontaneously in a language known to us as Sanskrit. Whatever is experienced in the Soul by Sadhana—spiritual practices—regardless of time, place and personality is a sort of Veda.

There are four great Vedas—Rik, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. Each consists of three parts: Mantra, Brahmana, and Aranyaka. The word Rik means Knowledge in hymns; Yajur, Knowledge in prose; Sama, Knowledge in songs and the Atharva Veda is a compilation of later incantations and chants.

Mantras (the Samhita portion) are the original Vedas. The Brahmanas are comments on the Mantras, and the Aranyakas are the books intended for those who dwell in the retreat. The major portion of the Aranyakas is formed by the Upanishads. The word Upanishad means knowledge obtained through discipleship.

Vedanta is a system of Philosophy which is fundamentally Religious having for its aim the ascertainment of the Eternal and Universal principle formulated by the Vedas, and its ultimate realization in life. It is thus both a philosophy and a religion. The study of Vedanta enables man first to idealize the really Real and then to realize the ideally Ideal.

The four Vedas were originally arranged by the sage Vyasa, to whom also is attributed the authorship of the Brahma Sutras—the Vedanta Aphorisms.

What life is to living beings; what humanity is to Mankind, that is Vedanta to all Religions. It is their common unity—inner essence and as such has no quarrel with them. The whole can have no quarrel with its parts.

Says Max Muller: "Vedanta has room for all religions. Nay, it embraces them all."

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The VEDANTA SOCIETY

is a Religious body having for
its objects:

- (1) To disseminate the Ethics and Religion of the Vedas through Logic and Reason.
- (2) To inculcate the Oneness of the Origin and Goal of all Religions.
- (3) To promote Sympathy and Harmony among mankind on the basic principle of Unity of Life and of God.

SELECTIONS FROM THE UPANISHADS

Satyakama, the son of Jabala, addressed his mother and said: "I wish to become a Brahmacharin (religious student), mother. Of what family am I?"

She said to him: "I do not know, my child, of what family thou art. In my youth when I had to move about much as a servant (waiting on the guests in my father's house), I conceived thee. I do not know of what family thou art. I am Jabala by name, thou art Satyakama (Philaethes). Say that thou art Satyakama Jabala."

He going to Gautama Haridrumata said to him, "I wish to become a Brahmacharin with you, Sir. May I come to you, Sir?"

He said to him: "Of what family are you, my friend?"

He replied: "I do not know, Sir, of what family I am. I asked my mother, and she answered: 'In my youth when I had to move about much as a servant, I conceived thee. I do not know of what family thou art. I am Jabala by name, thou art Satyakama,' I am therefore Satyakama Jabala, Sir."

He said to him: "No one but a true Brahmana would thus speak out. Go and fetch fuel, friend, I shall initiate you. You have not swerved from the truth."

*Chandogya-Upanishad, IV Prapathaka
6th. Khanda.*

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oO—

*"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"
Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

Vol. I.

FEBRUARY, 1931

No. 2

A BLESSING FROM SWAMI SHIVANANDA

*Present Spiritual Leader of Sri Ramakrishna Mission,
Belur Math, India*

I hail with joy the project of the Vedanta Society of New York of starting a magazine from the coming year. We are living in an age of growing unity and harmony. Everywhere the human heart is longing for kinship and brotherhood. At this juncture Vedanta, which is the synthesis of all philosophies and religions, will undoubtedly be a great cementing factor between all sections of people, whatever their race, creed or sex. As such the new Vedanta monthly will, I am sure, be the medium of a healthy exchange of the ideals of the Orient and the Occident. May it always present the lofty spiritual ideals of India, the discoveries of her ancient sages, to the truth-seekers of the West, without diluting them to suit the taste of present-day materialism! May it ever stand for truth, purity, love and peace—as befits a mouthpiece of the great Masters, Sri Ramakrishna and

Swami Vivekananda! May it vindicate the potential divinity of the human soul, which is birthless and deathless, beyond the mind and body, the essence of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss! May it bring home to all the truth that having sincerity and perseverance each one is bound to reach the one Goal of the universe—God or Brahman!

Shivananda.

VEDIC PRAYERS

“Om! Whole is That; whole too is This. From whole, whole cometh. Take whole from whole, yet whole remains, Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!”

“Hari Om! May He protect us together! May He foster us together! Let us together strive energetically! Let that which we study be full of strength. And let us not hate each other. Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!”

“From the unreal lead me to the real; from darkness to light, from death to immortality. O Rudra! Come to me and protect me evermore with Thy benignant Face. Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!”

“Whom Brahma, Varuna, Indra, Rudra and the Maruts praise with divine hymns; Whom the singers of Sama sing by the Vedas with full complement of parts, consecutive sections and Upanishads; Whom the Yogins see with their minds absorbed in Him through perfection in meditation, and Whose limits the hosts of Devas and Asuras know not; our salutations are to Him!”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA*On Self Knowledge*

Know thyself and you shall then know God. What is my ego? Is it my hand or foot—or flesh or blood or any other part of my body? Reflect well and you will know that there is no such thing as “I”. The more you peel off the skin of an onion, the more skin only appears—you cannot get any kernel. So when you analyze the ego, it vanishes away into nothingness. What is ultimately left behind is the atman (soul)—the pure Chit (Knowledge absolute). God appears when ego dies.

There are two egos—one ripe and the other unripe. This is my house, my room, my son—the ego that has this idea is unripe; while the ripe ego is that which thinks “I am the servant of the Lord, I am His child, I am ever free and all-knowing”.

A person's egoism never leaves him altogether so long as he possesses a body; some trace is always left behind. The leaves of a cocoa palm fall off, but leave their marks behind on the trunk. So also with one's egoism. But this slight egoism does not fetter one who is already free.

There are two kinds of reasoning—Involution and Evolution. Of the shell of a fruit is the kernel: so of the kernel is the shell.

It is ignorance that leads one to seek for God outside oneself. When one feels that God is within Oneself, it

is knowledge. He who has it here (i.e., feels the presence of God within himself) has it also there (i.e., has his place at His lotus feet).

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

On the Vedanta

There are truths that are true only in a certain line, in a certain direction, under certain circumstances, and for certain times, those that are founded on the institutions of the time; there are other truths that are based on the nature of man himself that must endure so long as man himself endures. These are the truths that alone can be universal, and in spite of all the changes that, we are sure, must have come in India, as to our social surroundings, our methods of dress, our manner of eating, our modes of worship, even all these have changed, still these universal truths of the Srutis, the marvellous Vedantic ideas, stand in their own sublimity, immovable, unvanquishable, deathless, and immortal. Yet the germs of all the ideas that are developed in the Upanishads have been taught already in the Karma-kanda. The idea of the cosmos, which all sects of Vedantists had to take for granted, the psychology which has formed the common basis of all Indian schools of thought, had been worked out already and presented before the world. A few words, therefore, about it are necessary before we start in the spiritual portion of the Vedanta alone, and I want to clear myself of one thing first, that is, my

use of the word Vedanta. Unfortunately there is a mistake committed many times in modern India, that the word Vedanta has reference only the Advaitist system, but you must always remember that in modern India there are the three Prasthanas for man to study. First of all there are the revelations, by which I mean the Upanishads. Secondly, among our philosophies, the Sutras of Vyasa have the greatest prominence, on account of their being the summation of all the preceding systems of philosophy; not that these systems are contradictory to one another, but that one is based on the other, it is a gradual unfolding of the theme which culminates in the Sutras of Vyasa; and between the Upanishads and the Sutras, which are the systematising of the marvellous truths of the Vedanta, comes in the divine commentary of the Vedanta, Sri Gita. The Upanishads, the Gita, and the Vyasa Sutras, therefore, have been taken up by every sect in India which wants to claim authority to be orthodox, whether Dualist, or Vaishnavist, or Advaitist it matters little, but the authorities of each are these three. We find that a Sankaracharya, or a Ramanuja, or a Madhwacharya, or a Vallabhacharya, or a Chaitanya,—any one who wanted to propound a new sect—had to take up these three systems and write only a new commentary on them. Therefore it would be wrong to confine the word Vedanta only to one system which has arisen out of the Upanishads. All these have been covered by the word Vedanta. The Ramanujist has as much right to be called a Vedantist as the Advaitist; in fact I will go a little further and

say that what we really mean by the word Hindu is the word Vedantist; the word Vedantist will express it too. One idea more I want you to note, that these systems have been current in India almost from time immemorial—for you must not believe that Sankara was the inventor of the Advaitist system; it existed ages before Sankara was born; he was one of its last representatives. So was the Ramanujist system; it existed ages before Ramanuja existed, as we already know by the commentaries they have written; so were all the Dualistic systems that have existed side by side with the others, and with my little knowledge I have come to the conclusion that they do not contradict each other. Just as in the case of the six Darsanas of ours, we find that they are a grand unfolding of the grand principles, the music beginning in the soft low notes, and ending in the triumphant blast of the Advaita, so also in these three systems we find the gradual working up of the human mind towards higher and higher ideals, till everything is merged in that wonderful unity which is reached in the Advaita system. Therefore these three are not contradictory.

THE GITA AND ITS TEACHINGS

The Gita has been metaphorically compared to the milk obtained from cows representing the Upanishads, the concluding portions of the Vedas. The milker was Sri Krishna, and Arjuna, the valiant prince and warrior,

was the calf. The milk thus collected was meant not only for Arjuna, the calf, but for all those blessed souls that crave it. All the Hindu scriptures speak of the practical ways and means to salvation, and hence they have this value for those only who aspire to a life divine here and hereafter, and this Holy Book is a highly interesting compendium of the Upanishads. It is not a dogmatic doctrine of one sect of the Hindus, but is a philosophic dissertation on the real values of life.

The Gita is in the form of a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, where two belligerent armies were drawn up in battle array. This memorable fight was fought between two branches of cousins, one represented by King Duryodhana, and the other by King Yudhishthira aided by his great friend and well-wisher Sri Krishna, the King of Dwaraka. Dhritarastra, the father of Duryodhana, being born blind, was disqualified from ascending the throne of his father and Pandu, the younger brother was crowned King. After a successful and peaceful reign for a term of years, Pandu vacated the throne in favor of his eldest son, Yudhishthira, and retired to solitude. The wicked sons of Dhritarastra could not tolerate this and through a series of mean and treacherous tricks they managed to drive the five honest, upright and pious sons of Pandu, their mother and wife, to an exile of twelve long years. After the term of exile was over, Yudhishthira returned and claimed his rightful throne from Duryodhana who had meanwhile secured it for himself and his brothers. He was stubbornly refused and no amount

VEDANTA DARPANA

of persuasion and intercession on the part of the elders, friends and well-wishers of both parties bore any fruit. The sons of Dhritarastra would not yield, but declared on the other hand, that they would not part with a jot of ground without the arbitrament of arms. The blind father, blinded by his inordinate attachment to his children, was absolutely powerless in protesting against this mischievous conduct, and the inevitable result was war.

Both parties mobilised huge armies and many a valiant warrior joined either of the two. Even Duryodhana found among his supporters unconquerable heroes like Bhishma, Drona and Kripa who could not help espousing the unrighteous cause, for they had been faithful adherents and supporters throughout their lives and could not thus prove themselves treacherous by deserting him at the moment of need. Thus, when the two formidable armies stood ready for the imminent clash and fearful carnage, Arjuna, the third brother of Yudhisthira, asked Sri Krishna, his charioteer, to drive his chariot in the midst of the two armies, so that he might see who the people were with whom he was going to fight. Though he was a mighty warrior of his day and had won many a victory, he could not bear the sight of his venerable elders, teachers, dear friends and relatives marshalled in battle array before him. He was overwhelmed with grief at the thought that for material gain he was going to fight, and, possibly kill those loving and respected sires and friends. True it was that his brothers and he had been unjustly deprived of their rightful kingdom and were

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subjected to untold misery, humiliation and insult, yet it appeared to him that it would be magnanimity on their part to relinquish all rights and retire to suffer all the ills of life quietly, leaving the usurpers of the throne to be happy in their achievement, rather than resort to that inhuman brutality and holocaust called war, followed by its inevitable consequences of social, political, moral and spiritual disorder and degeneration. He was so much overpowered and bewildered with the thought, that he laid aside his weapons determined not to fight, and besought his charioteer-friend for help and guidance.

Sri Krishna had to save the situation by exhorting Arjuna not to be overwhelmed by momentary weakness of the mind due to sheer ignorance, and the dialogue that followed afterward came to be known as the Bhagavad Gita,—that which was sung by the Lord, Sri Krishna. It is a part of a chapter of the renowned Epic, the Mahabharata, where it is represented as being reported by Sanjaya to Dhritarastra. Before the war began, a great sage named Vyasa approached the blind King and enquired if he was willing to witness the fight, and if he so wished, this great sage was ready to confer the power of vision upon him. The King rejected this offer, for he abhorred the sight of man-slaughter. But after ten days of continuous fighting, when the mighty Bhishma fell and the news was conveyed to him he wanted to hear all that had happened in the battlefield, and Sanjaya, who had witnessed everything with the help of his divine vision, began narrating all the events of the war.

DEATH AND AFTER DEATH

Once this question was put to Yudhisthira, the great hero of the Mahabharata: "What thing in this world of ours is most common and, at the same time, most mysterious?" To that question Yudhisthira answered: "It is Death".

Every day thousands upon thousands of people die. Yet those who remain never think seriously upon this question.

Once a Persian king came to visit a Roman king. This Roman King showed his royal guest all his beautiful things—his museum, park, palace, etc.—and, naturally, he expected from him some words of appreciation. But this king, instead of expressing his appreciation of those beautiful things, said: "I see people die in Rome just as they die in Persia. What have you done to escape death? Have you ever pondered this great question?"

Most of you have read the life of Buddha, particularly Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia". In the course of several successive drives, he saw four sights. The first time, he saw a diseased man; the second time, he saw an old man, and the third time he saw a dead body in a funeral procession. And when he saw it, he asked his companion what that procession meant. His companion said: "Somebody died, and his friends are mourning and carrying his body to the crematory". Then he asked, "What is death? Shall I die? Shall my wife die?" "Yes, Noble Prince, death is the common lot of all hu-

man beings. No one can escape death," was the answer. Then he said: "No, I shall not go further. Take me back home." He at once began to deliberate upon this vital problem. Finally, he found a solution of it—that is, how to conquer death.

Confucius once took some students out on an excursion and one of them asked him about death. Confucius said, "If you do not know what life is, you cannot know death." Then again, the student asked him to tell about the worship of the dead. To that he said, "If you cannot worship your friends while they are alive, how can you worship them when they are dead?" Shakespeare put these words into the mouth of Hamlet: "Death, that undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveler ever returns."

Now, dear friends, it is worth our while to discuss this question, "What is death?" In the Katha Upanishad, one of the most famous of the Upanishads, we find this question fully discussed. We find a young student approaches a great teacher, and begs him to enlighten him upon the question of death. Yama, the great master, offers him three boons, and for the third he asks the teacher to tell him about death. "There is this great doubt among mankind as to the existence after death. Some believe the soul survives death, and some believe that nothing exists after death. Now tell me the truth about it." Then the great master, himself the God of Death, answers his question. I shall explain to you one or two verses of that Upanishad later.

Is death real? Of course, the materialist will answer

it is. According to him, nothing survives death. Nothing exists after death. But if life is a reality, can it come from nothing? And can it pass into nothingness by the merest accident of death? To us death is only a transition—a passage from one state to another. It is a wide-open door between two rooms, as it were. When we pass from one room into another, we do not lose anything. Rather am I inclined to believe that when we pass from this state of embodied life into that other life, we enjoy a larger freedom because, after all, this condition of terrestrial existence is a bondage. Therefore, we Hindus believe that life is not the few years of earthly existence limited by birth at one end and by death at the other. Birth and death are only two incidents. Death is not an end. We do not lose anything by death. We do not die at all. It is only through ignorance that we think we lose anything by death, or we become non-existent after death.

In the second chapter of the Gita, the real nature of the soul is described. If the soul is an eternal and immortal entity the natural conclusion is that it existed in the past, and because it exists now and has existed before, the necessary conclusion is that it shall exist in the future. What exists cannot come from nothing. Upon that doctrine is based the Hindu theory of Evolution. What is has not come from nothing but has come from what was, and what is now shall continue to exist. That is, life has not come from nothing. If we can determine the real nature of our own existence here and heretofore, then and then alone can we know,

by scientific and scholastic investigation, the hereafter of the dead. Hindu philosophy has devoted more time and thought to the determination of the past of the soul than of its future, because if the past can be established, then it is easy to establish the future.

The Hindu theory of Evolution includes Karma, which means the law of cause and effect. And, according to this theory, as we understand it in India, there is no substantial difference between the effect and the cause, or between now and before, or between now and after. These are only various states of a permanent entity. There is no sharp line of demarcation between the past and present, and between the present and future. Or in other words, there is eternal continuity of that real entity which is called the soul. By immortality we do not mean that the soul did not exist in the past, but by the merest accident of being born into this world and of having lived in this body for one term of life, it shall continue to exist for all eternity. If the soul did not exist in the past—if it was dead in the past, the fact of existing in this body for a few years cannot make it exist forever.

Demonstrating the absurdity of this conception of the soul, Schopenhauer said that Christianity has given us an idea of the soul which might be likened to an infinite stick with one end only. A stick cannot be infinite with an end. It must be endless both ways. If the soul is immortal it must have existed in the past, and because it is an existent entity it shall exist in the future. This is the logical conclusion.

SELECTIONS FROM THE UPANISHADS

*A Discourse between Yagnavalkya and
his wife, Maitreyi.*

Maitreyi said: "My Lord, if this whole earth, full of wealth, belonged to me, tell me, should I be immortal by it?"

"No," replied Yagnavalkya; "like the life of rich people will be thy life. But there is no hope of immortality by wealth."

And Maitreyi said: "What should I do with that by which I do not become immortal? What my Lord knoweth (of immortality), tell that to me."

Yagnavalkya replied: "Thou who art truly dear to me, thou speakest dear words. Come, sit down, I will explain it to thee, and mark well what I say."

And he said: "Verily, a husband is not dear, that you may love the husband; but that you may love the Self, therefore a husband is dear.

"Verily, a wife is not dear, that you may love the wife; but that you may love the Self, therefore a wife is dear.

"Verily, sons are not dear, that you may love the sons; but that you may love the Self, therefore sons are dear.

"Verily, the Brahman-class is not dear, that you may love the Brahman-class; but that you may love the Self, therefore the Brahman-class is dear.

"Verily, the Kshatra-class is not dear, that you may love the Kshatra-class; but that you may love the Self, therefore the Kshatra-class is dear.

"Verily, the worlds are not dear, that you may love the worlds; but that you may love the Self, therefore the worlds are dear.

"Verily, the Devas are not dear, that you may love the Devas; but that you may love the Self, therefore the Devas are dear.

"Verily, creatures are not dear, that you may love the creatures; but that you may love the Self, therefore are creatures dear.

"Verily, everything is not dear that you may love everything; but that you may love the Self, therefore everything is dear.

"Verily, the Self is to be seen, to be heard, to be perceived, to be known, O Maitreyi! When we see, hear perceive, and know the Self, then all this is known."

*Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad, II Adhyaya
4th. Brahmana.*

The VEDANTA SOCIETY

is a Religious body having for
its objects:

- (1) To disseminate the Ethics and Religion of the Vedas through Logic and Reason.
- (2) To inculcate the Oneness of the Origin and Goal of all Religions.
- (3) To promote Sympathy and Harmony among mankind on the basic principle of Unity of Life and of God.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:

*We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.*

May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

Vol. I.

MARCH, 1931

No. 3

VEDIC PRAYERS

Sweet blow the winds, and rivers scatter sweetness!
May the herbs and trees be full of honeyed sweetness!
May night and day yield us joy! May the dust of the
earth be sweet unto us! May Father Heaven give us
happiness! May the sun shower bliss on us! May the
cows yield us sweet milk! Om Joy! Sweetness! Bliss!

O Lord! Thou art infinite Energy! Do Thou fill
me with energy. Thou art infinite Virility. Do Thou
endow me with virility. Thou art infinite Strength. Do
Thou inspire me with strength. Thou art infinite Power.
Do Thou grant me power. Thou art infinite Courage.
Do Thou give me courage. Thou art infinite Fortitude.
Do Thou steel me with fortitude. 224339

He dwells in the fire, in the water, in the plants and
trees, and indeed pervades the whole Universe. We
bow to that Effulgent One!

SRI RAMAKRISHNA*On God*

There is no distinction between Impersonal God (Brahman) on the one hand and Personal God (Shakti) on the other. When the Supreme Being is thought of as inactive, He is styled God the Absolute (Suddha Brahman); and when He is thought of as active — creating, sustaining and destroying — He is styled Shakti or Personal God.

Have you any idea of God with form and God without form? They are like ice and water. When water freezes into ice, it has a form; when the same ice is melted into water all form is lost.

God with form and God without form are not two different Beings. He who is with form is also without form. To a devotee God manifests Himself in various forms. Just think of a shoreless ocean — an infinite expanse of water — no land visible in any direction; only here and there are visible blocks of ice formed by intense cold. Similarly, under the cooling influence, so to say, of the deep devotion of His worshipper, the Infinite reduces Himself into the Finite and appears before him as a Being with form. Again, as on the appearance of the sun, the ice melts away, so on the appearance of the Sun of Knowledge, God with form melts away into the formless.

THE SEARCH FOR THE ULTIMATE UNITY

By Swami Vivekananda.

"What is that knowing which we know everything else?"

In modern language the theme of the Upanishads, like the theme of every other knowledge, is to find an ultimate unity of things, for you must remember that knowledge is nothing but finding unity in the midst of diversity. Each science is based upon this; all human knowledge is based upon the finding of unity in the midst of diversity; and if it is the task of small bits of human knowledge, which I call our sciences, to find unity in the midst of a few different phenomena, the task becomes stupendous when the theme before us is to find unity in the midst of this marvelously diversified universe, different in name and form, different in matter and spirit, different in everything; each thought differing from every other thought, each form differing from every other form, how many planes, unending Lokas—in the midst of this to find unity, this is the theme of the Upanishads; that we understand. On the other hand the old idea of "Arundhati Nyaya" applies. To show a man the Pole Star one takes the nearest star which is bigger than the Pole Star and more brilliant, and leads him to fix his mind on that, until at last he comes to the Pole Star. This is the task before us, and to prove

my idea I have simply to show you the Upanishads, and you will see it.

Nearly every chapter of the Upanishads begins with Dualistic teaching, "Upasana". Later on God is first taught as some one who is the Creator of this universe, its Preserver, and unto whom everything goes at last. He is one to be worshipped, the Ruler, the Guide of nature, external and internal, yet as if He were something outside of nature and external. One step further, and we find the same teacher teaching that this God is not outside nature, but immanent in nature. And at last both ideas are discarded and whatever is real is He; there is no difference. "Tat twam asi, Svetaketu." That immanent one is at last declared to be the same that is in the human soul. "Svetaketu, Thou art That." Here is no compromise; here is no fear of others' opinions. Truth, bold truth, has been taught in bold language, and we need not fear to preach the truth in the same bold language to-day.

To go back to our preliminaries. There are first two things to be understood, one the psychological aspect common to all the Vedantic schools, and the other the cosmological aspect. To-day you find wonderful discoveries of modern science coming upon us like bolts from the blue, opening our eyes to marvels we never dreamt of. Man had long since discovered what he calls force. It is only the other day that man came to know that even in the midst of this variety of forces

there is a unity. Man has just discovered that what he calls heat, or magnetism or electricity, or so forth, are all convertible into one thing, and as such he expresses all that one unit force, whatever you may call it. This has been done even in the Samhita, old and ancient, hoary as the Samhita is that very idea of force I was referring you to. All the forces, either you call them gravitation, or attraction, or repulsion, either expressing themselves as heat, or electricity, or magnetism, are nothing, not one step further. They express themselves as thought, reflected from "Antahkarana"—the inner organs of man have one organ,—and the unit from which they spring is what is called "Prana". Again what is "Prana?" Prana is "Spandana" or vibration. When all this universe will have resolved back into its primal state, what becomes of this infinite force? Do they think that it becomes extinct? Of course not. If it became extinct, what would be the cause of the next wave, because the motion is going in wave forms, rising, falling, rising again, falling again? Here is the word "Srishti" which expresses the universe. Mark that the word is not creation. I am helpless in talking English; I have to translate the Sanskrit words anyhow. It is "Srishti", projection. Everything becomes finer and finer and is resolved back to the primal state from which it sprang, and there it remains for a time, quiescent, ready to spring forth again. That is "Srishti", projection. And what becomes of all these forces, the "Prana"? They are resolved back into the primal "Prana", and

this "Prana" becomes almost motionless — not entirely motionless, but almost motionless — and that is what is described in the Sukta. "It vibrated without vibrations", "Anidavatam". There are many difficult texts in the Upanishads to understand, especially in the use of technical phrases. For instance the word "Vayu", to move; many times it means air and many times motion, and often people confuse one with the other. We have to take care of this. "It existed in that form." And what becomes of what you call matter? The forces permeate all matter; they all dissolve into ether, from which they again come out; and the first to come out was "Akasa". Whether you translate it as ether, or anything else, this is the idea, that this "Akasa" is the primal form of matter. This "Akasa" vibrates under the action of "Prana", and when the next "Srishti" is coming up, as the vibration becomes quicker, the "Akasa" is lashed into all these wave forms which we call suns, and moons, and systems.

"Yadidam kincha jagat sarvam prana ejati nisritam." We read again: "Everything in this universe has been projected, Prana vibrating." You must mark the word "Ejati", because it comes from "Ej", to vibrate, "Nisritam" projected, "Yadidam kincha"—whatever is this universe.

TEACHINGS OF THE GITA

Viewed from various angles.

The dialogue does not end in a sophistical quibble of technical monstrosities; on the other hand, it deals with the important problems of life from all possible angles, for a successful solution. According to some, the story of the war between the two parties, represents allegorically the constant battle between good and evil in our nature. Wickedness, unrighteousness and vice, in short evil born of ignorance is represented by the sons of the blind King Dhritarastra, and Virtues are represented by King Yudhisthira and his brothers aided by Sri Krishna, the ever-loving Good Conscience. Due to ignorance we very often succumb to Evil and commit what is not right and wholesome, and then try to justify our acts with cogent reasons thereby deriving apparent satisfaction, at least for the time being. If we are to act manfully and live the high standard of life of a rational being, we must bring into active use our Right Conscience—a conscience that is not blinded or perverted by popular beliefs and wrong discrimination. Man can successfully take his stand as the finest flower in the garden of the Creator when he succeeds in inflicting a crushing defeat on Evil, the animal man that has ever been at war with his higher nature, in the course of his progress toward a higher evolution in life.

In the Gita, Sri Krishna exhorts Arjuna to be firm

and fight for truth and justice instead of falling a prey to Evil which always tries to gain the upper hand. Standing firmly upon the conviction of the eternal and Divine nature of the Soul, we should do all our duties without being identified with the various elements which alone are responsible for the changing phenomena of Nature. The essence of our Soul is the Supreme Spirit, the all-full and the repository of absolute Bliss; consequently, we will not be swayed by the experiences of the pairs of opposites like heat and cold, success and failure, etc. There are other ways besides, viz., the paths of Raja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga, all of which equally supply the key to the solution of that eternal problem of life, in other words, how to transcend the lower mortal nature of man and realize what is Immortal and Divine.

Critics, particularly Western Scholars, are prone to think that a philosophy which incites to, and provides justification for a man to participate in, war, can on no ground whatever be considered wholesome to society and man. Further, admitting the merits of the teachings of the Gita, they are surely inconsistent with the story of the fight: for it is inconceivable that such a high philosophy was taught at a time as momentous and critical as that of war, when anything but philosophy can be taught and learnt. In reply it is maintained that the story of the war is the fittest background for such a philosophy. People have the impression that philosophy is meant for the idle, easy-going, arm-chair

philosophers, and is a fit repast for the leisure hours in the drawing-room of the intellectual few. If philosophy cannot be brought to practical use in solving our knotty problems it can have no value with us at all. It is only on such occasions that philosophy can unmistakably show us the right way by throwing its full-blaze of light upon all the various issues of life. This is the reason why the Vedanta Philosophy claims to be the most practical. It helps man not only in the ordinary affairs of conduct to regulate himself in his progress toward his final destination, but also in such extreme cross-currents like war, when he gets confused as to what he should do: whether, like a true man he should act for a right and just cause, without giving himself up to passion and avarice, or succumb to injustice and vice out of sheer weakness and fear. Of course, the story of the war is incidental here and shows that even on such occasions, one should perform one's rigorous duty, taking a firm stand upon the conviction and knowledge gained through philosophy. Hence there is no incongruity in the story; on the other hand, that proves the worth and inherent strength of the teachings inculcated therein.

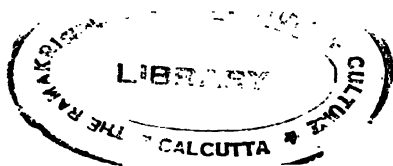
DEATH AND AFTER DEATH—Continued

(The part of Karma)

I shall explain to you one or two verses of the Gita where the idea of the immortality of the soul has been

discussed and demonstrated. The Hindu teachers and philosophers had a most scientific conception of the soul. The soul is never born, because if you admit that the soul is born, or comes into existence by the accident of birth, then you must also admit that it shall cease to exist, because it was non-existent before. You cannot have a straight line with one end. A straight line must have two ends. If the soul is born it must end sometime, somewhere. Even if it exists for one thousand years or one million years, it must end. The soul is neither a cause nor an effect. That is, it is neither a parent nor a child. According to the law of Karma, we are born of certain environmental or parental conditions, according to the character of our Karma. And what does Karma mean? It is the accumulated effect of our impressions in the past. What I do either by thought or by word or by act, leaves an impression upon the subconscious mind. And the effects of all those impressions are stored up and recorded on the subconscious mind—and no one can escape from reaping the crops of what he himself has sown. The meaning of the doctrine of Karma may be expressed in these few words: "What a man sows, that he shall reap."

There are three kinds of Karma. We call them Sanchita, Prarabdha and Agami. Certain deeds done in the past have not yet produced their effects. They may not produce effects in this incarnation, but they must produce effects in some future incarnation. Some effects are worked out immediately and there are some



that are exhausted after one has attained perfection. This law of Karma, as we understand it, is an unbreakable law. It does not countenance any belief in substitution or proxy or vicarious atonement, and the believers in this doctrine say that we can escape from the effects of our deeds only by abstaining from doing those deeds. But what we have already done must produce its effect. Those people who believe in the theory of one incarnation or one term of life cannot explain rationally all the conditions of life here. In the first place, those people who believe that we were created by a benevolent, almighty and all-wise God, they cannot sustain their position, because if this God is a just God, a merciful God, and a powerful and wise God, and if this is our only term of life here, if we shall not exist in the future and did not exist in the past, then the most natural and fair conclusion is that this just and merciful, powerful and wise God should have given us all the same equal opportunities. Now this sense of justice which is so inherent in us, can never be satisfied by the theory of single incarnation or one term of life. And there are other fallacies in that theory which shall not discuss now.

This doctrine of immortality or eternal life has been discussed from various angles by the Hindu philosophers and they endeavored to reach a fair and logical conclusion. Their main interest was the ascertainment of truth. They cared very little for doctrines or dogmas. If certain doctrines or dogmas had to be overthrown in the

search after truth, without any fear they discarded
; because after all our greatest aim of life is not
blind adherence to any particular faith or any par-
ticular belief, or any particular philosophy, but to live
and realize the truth. And truth is truth only then
when it is our truth by our own conviction and realiza-
tion. So I want you to remember this great object that
we have in our life, that is: the ascertainment and
realization of truth, and not adherence to any set of
doctrines, or any creed or cult or philosophy. "It is
not to be born in the church, but not to die in it."
All these propounders of Hindu philosophy agreed to
this. Each of these great authors propounded his own
theory of the final truth, and they also advanced their
theories of the universe, God and the Soul. But, as I
say, each one has thought independently upon this great
problem. Although their theories are different, their aim
is the same—that is, the knowledge of the truth. There
fore can we find a perfect reason for harmony of re-
ligions. By harmony of religions or by unity of re-
ligions we must not understand that there must be only
one religion which shall be followed by the whole human
race. There must be as many ways of thought and re-
search, or avenues of approach to this final truth, as
there are human beings. Every individual must be free
to think and to reason for himself. And if by having
that freedom of thought and expression we make mis-
takes, that is far better than never to think and reason
at all. Those people who think and act make mistakes,

and those who never think and never act, never make mistakes. I for one would rather make mistakes by living an active life, than live the life of a tree or a rock, without making mistakes. Always think for yourself. Do not accept the theories of others. Of course, those theories may be right, may be true, but as I said, if the attainment of the truth is our highest object in life, and if truth is truth only by our experience and realization, then why should we blindly follow any faith or any system of philosophy? Let each one of us be a Rishi—a seer; make our own self a reflector of that eternal and universal truth. That truth is like the sun casting its light upon all, only we do not know how to receive that light and how to reflect it. That is the greatest achievement of life.

SELECTIONS FROM THE UPANISHADS

Brahman obtained the victory for the Devas. The Devas became elated by the victory of Brahman, and they thought, this victory is ours only, this greatness is ours only.

Brahman perceived this and appeared to them. But they did not know it, and said: "What spruce (yaksha) is this?"

They said to Agni (fire): "O Jatavedas, find out what sprite this is." "Yes," he said.

He ran toward it, and Brahman said to him: "Who are you?" He replied: "I am Agni, I am Jatavedas."

Brahman said: "What power is in you?" Agni replied: "I could burn all whatever there is on earth."

Brahman put a straw before him, saying: "Burn this." He went towards it with all his might, but he could not burn it. Then he returned thence and said: "I could not find out what sprite this is."

Then they said to Vayu (wind): "O Vayu, find out what sprite this is." "Yes," he said.

He ran toward it, and Brahman said to him: "Who are you?" He replied: "I am Vayu, I am Matarishvan."

Brahman said: "What power is in you?" Vayu replied: "I could take up all whatever there is on earth."

Brahman put a straw before him, saying: "Take it up." He went towards it with all his might, but he could not take it up. Then he returned thence and said: "I could not find out what sprite this is."

Then they said to Indra: "O Maghavan, find out what sprite this is." He went towards it, but it disappeared before him.

Then in the space (ether) he came towards a woman, highly adorned: She was Uma, the daughter of Himavat. He said to her: "Who is that sprite?"

She replied: "It is Brahman. It is through the victory of Brahman that you have thus become great." After that he knew it was Brahman.

Talavakara-Upanishad
Khanda III-IV.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. What are the sheaths of the soul according to Vedanta?

A. There are five sheaths (*koshas*) of the soul according to Vedanta. The first or outermost one is called material; the second, vital; the third, sensual; the fourth, intellectual and the fifth, semi-spiritual. These correspond to the three bodies: physical or gross (*sthula*); subtle or fine (*sukshma*); causal or thoughtful (*karana*). The material and the vital sheaths correspond to the physical body; the sensual and the intellectual sheath to the subtle body; and the semi-spiritual sheath to the causal body.

Q. Mortification being one of the observances (*Niyamas*), are there any special modes of mortification recommended by Vedanta?

A. There are three kinds of mortification (*tapas*) recommended by the ancient teachers of Yoga: physical, verbal and mental. Physical *tapas* consists in fasting, serving, visiting holy places, cleansing chapels, observing vows of continence, non-killing, etc. Telling the truth, speaking with moderation, uttering sacred words, are called verbal *tapas*. Study, worship, meditation, control, silence, are called mental *tapas*.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—o0o—

*"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"*

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

Vol. I.

APRIL, 1931

No. 4

PRAYERS

As the rivers, rising from different sources coursing through different channels, flow into the same Ocean; even so the different paths which men, belonging to various systems such as Samkhya, Yoga, Vaishnavism, etc., follow through various spiritual aptitudes, ultimately lead to Thee. Thou art the only Goal.

He who is worshipped as Shiva by the Shaivas, as Brahman by the Vedantists, as Buddha by the Buddhists, as Karta by the Naiyayikas, as Arhat by the Jainas, as Karma by the Mimamsakas, may that Hari—the Lord of the threefold world—grant us the object of our desire!

Thou art our Mother. Thou art our Father. Thou art our Friend. Thou art our Companion. Thou art our Wisdom. Thou art our Wealth. Thou art our all in all, Oh, God of Gods!

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

On Maya

Well, what do you think of the nature of Maya? It is like the weeds floating on a pond. You can push away the weeds, but presently the cleared space will fill in again. Similarly, so long as you reason within yourself and associate with holy men, everything seems clear; but shortly afterwards worldly desires will throw over the veil of illusion.

If the person possessed by an evil spirit has the consciousness that he is possessed, the evil spirit at once leaves him. Similarly the Jiva (individual soul) possessed by the spirit of Maya (Self-delusion), on realizing that he is self-deluded, becomes at once free from Maya.

Maya is of two kinds—one leading towards God (Vidya-Maya) and the other leading away from God (Avidya-Maya). Vidya-Maya again is of two kinds:—Discrimination and Non-attachment. With the help of these, individual souls surrender themselves to the mercy of God. Avidya-Maya is of six kinds:—Lust, Anger, Avarice, Inordinate attachment, Pride and Envy. This kind of Maya gives rise to the sense of “I and Mine” and serves to keep men chained to the world. But as soon as Vidya-Maya manifests itself, all Avidya-Maya is totally destroyed.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*On Cosmology and Psychology of Vedanta.*

There is the unity of force, Prana; there is the unity of matter called Akasa. Is there any unity to be found among them again? Can they be melted into one? Our modern science is mute here, has not yet found its way out, and if it is finding its way out, just as it has been slowly finding the same old Prana and the same ancient Akasa, it will have to move along the same lines. The next unity is the omnipresent impersonal being known by its old mythological name as Brahma, the four-headed Brahma, and psychologically called Mahat. There is where the two unite. What is called your brain is only a bit of this Mahat caught in the trap of the brain, and the sum total of all brains caught in the meshes of Mahat is what you call Samashti. Analysis had to go further; it was not yet complete. Here we were each one of us, as it were, a microcosm, and the world taken altogether is the macrocosm. But whatever is in the Vyashti, we may safely conjecture that a similar thing is happening also outside. If we had the power to analyse our own minds we might safely conjecture that the same thing is happening in our own minds.

What is this mind is the question. In modern times in Western countries, as physical science is making rapid progress, as physiology is step by step conquering stronghold after stronghold of old religions, the Western people

do not know where to stand, because to their great despair modern physiology has identified the mind with the brain at every step. And that we in India have known always. That was the first proposition the Hindu boy should learn, that the mind is matter, only finer. The body is gross, and behind the body is what we call the Sukshma Sarira, the fine body or mind. This is also material, only finer; and is not the Atman. I will not translate this word to you in English, because the idea does not exist in Europe; it is untranslatable. The modern attempt of German philosophers is to translate the word Atman by the word 'Self', and until that word is universally accepted it is impossible to use it. So, call it as self or anything, it is our Atman. This Atman is the real man behind. It is the Atman that uses the material mind as its instrument, its Antahkarana, as the psychological term for the mind is. And the mind by means of a series of internal organs works the visible organs of the body. What is this mind? It was only the other day that Western philosophers have come to know that the eyes are not the real organs of vision, but that behind these are other organs, the Indriyas, and if these are destroyed a man may have a thousand eyes, like Indra, but there will be no sight for him. Aye, our philosophy starts with this assumption, that by vision is not meant the external vision. The real vision belongs to the internal organs, the brain centers inside. You may call them what you like, but it is not that the Indriyas are the eyes, or the nose or ears. And the sum total of

all these Indriyas plus the Manas, Buddhi, Chitta, Ahan-kara, is what is called the mind, and if the modern physiologist comes to tell you that the brain is what is called the mind and that the brain is formed of so many organs, you need not be afraid at all; tell him your philosophers knew it always; it is the very alpha of your religion.

DEATH AND AFTER DEATH

(Amritattwa or Immortality)

If we say the soul survives death, then this question arises, most naturally and pertinently: If we existed in the past—the spirit part of our existence, the immortal part of our existence, that is, that part which is not born, which does not die, which existed in the past eternally and which shall exist in the future eternally, if that is our essence, if we are that spirit immortal and eternal—how is it that we are not conscious of the past? We do not remember how we existed in the past. Of course, there are many proofs as to the existence of the past, but the most rational and scientific proof is this: According to science, matter is indestructible, the whole mass of matter in the universe can never be destroyed. This mass of matter exists in different states or forms, but the totality of it is unchangeable and imperishable. You cannot add anything to it, you cannot subtract anything from it. If matter which exists in these various states is

indestructible and real, how can our consciousness of being, the consciousness of self-existence be unreal—a non-entity? You find in the Bible this statement: "Before Abraham was, I am." This consciousness of being is not the product of birth nor can it be lost by death. It is a self-evident truth.

Can anyone disbelieve or deny his own existence? To do that he would have to use his own self-consciousness. For instance, if I try to say "I am not", it is because of "I am" that I can say "I am not"—that is, I have to posit my own existence so that I can say "I am not". Descarte said "The doubter cannot doubt his own existence—*Cogito ergo Sum*—I think, therefore I am." But the Hindu philosopher would reverse the order and say "I am, therefore I think." "I am" is more important than "I think". Even an atheist or a materialist can never deny his own existence. So, that is the strongest proof of the existence of the soul. I have no doubt as to the existence of the soul in the past, and for that reason I have not the slightest doubt as to its existence in the future, but to be absolutely frank I do not know in what condition I existed in the past and how I shall exist in the future. The Soul is not destroyed by death nor does it begin by birth. Just as in this one incarnation there are visible changes like birth, growth, maturity, age and decay, so is death. According to medical science, every seven years a complete change takes place in our physical system. If we do not mourn when these changes come, why should we mourn or grieve or feel

sorrowful and distressed when this final change comes, which we ignorantly call death. The dead are those who have gone in advance. We are all sojourners, we are all wayfarers, we are all traveling this way of life. Man is not the merest being with three score and ten years of earthly existence, and life is not the short period of existence between birth and death. Life is an eternal road. This condition of freedom from death is called Amritattwa which means deathlessness. The Hindu philosophers have a most unique conception of deathlessness. In fact, by deathlessness they do not mean salvation from sin. By immortality they mean a state of eternal bliss and peace. That is our inner and eternal essence.

The thought that we are men or women, sick or healthy, young or old, white or dark, has its origin in ignorance, and so long as we harbor in our hearts those notions, we remain bound to the body and cannot escape from death. We are not only essentially immortal but eternally peaceful and blissful. All these conditions of birth, growth, etc., should not affect us. The Rishi, the inspired Seer, after realizing the state of deathlessness, proclaimed his experience in these words: "Hear, O children of immortal bliss, and ye who dwell in other spheres! I have known that great effulgent Purusha. Knowing Him alone can ye escape Death. There is no other way to immortality." He did not call you "sinners"; that is the most insulting word, most damaging word, most untruthful word, and for that reason I say

that this doctrine of sin is the most sinful doctrine. It has paved the way for humanity to weakness, wickedness and degeneration.

But hear this message. The Rishi knows the truth, he calls you children of immortal bliss. You are not mortals; you are not born in sin and shapen in iniquity; you do not die in Adam, nor are you made alive again in Christ; for you are eternally immortal; not in the sense that you are imperishable but subject to reward or punishment—that you can exist in heaven or hell in that everlasting life. Not in that sense, but your essence is bliss and peace, and all these notions are false, arising from ignorance, and you must escape from this ignorance which is the cause of all these false notions. In other words, you are your own Saviour. Not only Christ, but God, Himself, cannot save you unless you are ready for Salvation, unless you know how to save yourself—that is, until you have genuine thirst for Salvation and realized in your inner Self this eternal bliss and peace, you cannot be saved.

This teacher Yama, to whom the young student went to be enlightened upon this problem of death, concluded his teaching by telling him that immortality could be attained by the practice of Yoga. By Yoga is not meant here a few exercises of breathing and posture. Yoga is direct Knowledge of the Soul. That is Immortality.

I do not believe that somebody else can bring you to that state of realization or immortality or salvation. Salvation is not such a cheap thing. You live any sort of

life and by the mere fact of going to church or confessing to an ignorant priest, or paying for your pews, you cannot attain salvation. You are to pay the price for it. That is, you are to be awakened. You have to know by first-hand knowledge that you are immortal; that is the idea of Amritattwa—deathlessness. Of course those people who do not possess that knowledge, naturally remain blind to this phenomenal life, and reap the harvest of their own sowing. They cannot escape the law of Karma, and they die. That is, this so-called death is a reality to them in all its practical effects. They are afraid of death. They are confronted all the time by all forms of death, and they die many a time even before death actually comes. They fear that the food they eat may kill them. When they travel on a train they take out security in hope or fear of death by accident. Some people wish to die so that by their death their children will be benefited. They are always surrounded by that apparition of death. So death is a reality to them. But for the one who has attained knowledge, who has known that there is no death, there is only this eternal life of peace and bliss. They do not die. They may pass out of this body but that passing out of the body to them is a mere transition and no loss. Just as we do not lose anything by passing from one room to another.

Let me give you this illustration in closing: You have seen the mother cat carrying her little babies. If you have ever watched that phenomenon, you will have no difficulty in understanding this point. The little kitten,

when he is seized at the neck by the mother cat, and carried in her jaws from one place to another, that little creature feels abundant joy. He gives himself completely up to the mother. That reliance and sense of security give him infinite joy and freedom. But with the same jaws the cat catches a rat, and that means death to the rat. The phenomenon in its outer aspect is the same, as far as the jaws are concerned. But, as I said, the two experiences are entirely different.

To the man of knowledge, death is a great friend. Death releases him from this condition of finitude and bondage, into that state of abundant life and infinite joy and peace. Dear friends, the more you fear death, the more fearful it becomes. Realize your true self and declare as Paul did: "Oh, Death! Where is thy sting? Oh, Grave! where is thy victory?" And I assure you that by that knowledge you all can conquer this last enemy of man—Death.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS OF YAGNAVALKYA AND GARGI.

Then Vachaknavi said: 'Venerable Brahmanas, I shall ask him two questions. If he will answer them, none of you, I think, will defeat him in any argument concerning Brahman.'

Yagnavalkya said: 'Ask, O Gargi.'

She said: 'O Yagnavalkya, as the son of a warrior from the Kasis or Videhas might string his loosened bow, take two pointed foe-piercing arrows in his hand and rise to do battle, I have risen to fight thee with two questions. Answer me these questions.'

Yagnavalkya said: 'Ask, O Gargi.'

She said: 'O Yagnavalkya, that of which they say that it is above the heavens, beneath the earth, embracing heaven and earth, past, present and future, tell me in what is it woven, like warp and woof?'

Yagnavalkya said: 'That of which they say that it is above the heavens, beneath the earth, embracing heaven and earth, past, present and future, that is woven, like warp and woof, in the ether (akasa) !'

She said: 'I bow to thee, O Yagnavalkya, who hast solved me that question. Get thee ready for the second.'

Yagnavalkya said: 'Ask, O Gargi.'

Gargi said: 'In what then is the ether woven, like warp and woof?'

He said: 'O Gargi, the Brahmanas call this the Akshara (the imperishable). It is neither coarse nor fine, neither short nor long, neither red (like fire) nor fluid (like water); it is without shadow, without darkness, without air, without ether, without attachment, without taste, without smell, without ears, without speech, without mind, without light (vigour), without breath, without a mouth (or door), without measure, having no

within and no without, it devours nothing, and no one devours it.'

'By the command of that Akshara (the imperishable), O Gargi, sun and moon stand apart. By the command of that Akshara, O Gargi, heaven and earth stand apart. By the command of that Akshara, O Gargi, what are called moments (nimesha), hours (muhurta), days and nights, half months, months, seasons, years, all stand apart. By the command of that Akshara, O Gargi, some rivers flow to the East from the white mountains, others to the West, or to any other quarter. By the command of that Akshara, O Gargi, men praise those who give, the gods follow the sacrificer, the fathers the Darvi-offering.'

'That Brahman, O Gargi, is unseen, but seeing; unheard, but hearing; unperceived, but perceiving; unknown, but knowing. There is nothing that sees but it, nothing that hears but it, nothing that perceives but it, nothing that knows but it. In that Akshara then, O Gargi, the ether is woven, like warp and woof.'

Then said Gargi: 'Venerable Brahmanas, you may consider it a great thing, if you get off by bowing before him. No one, I believe, will defeat him in any argument concerning Brahman.' After that, Vachaknavi held her peace.

Bṛihadaranyaka-Upanishad

III Adhyaya, 8 Brahmana.

REPORT

The anniversary of the birth of Swami Vivekananda was held at the Vedanta Society on Sunday, January 18th. In the morning and afternoon services were held, with sermons on the Life and Teachings of the great Swami who first delivered the message of Vedanta to this country in 1893.

On the following Sunday, January 25th, a dinner took place at the Ceylon India Inn. Among the guests and speakers were such scholars as Dr. Kalidas Nag of the University of Calcutta. Both the Celebration and the dinner were most successful events.

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Swami Akhilananda dedicated the chapel of the newly built Vedanta home at Providence, R. I., on Sunday, February 22nd, which was also the day of the public Celebration of the birthday of Sri Rama Krishna. The chapel was beautifully decorated, with flowers on the altar and painted mottos from different Scriptures on the walls. More than 200 people participated in the ceremony.

Swami Prabhavananda arrived from Hollywood on Saturday, and Swami Bodhananda with three members of the New York Vedanta Society were also present. Swami Akhilananda welcomed the members and visitors

with a most cordial address. The congregation was delighted with the program which consisted of other functions, such as talks, music, prayer and benediction. Light refreshments were served at the close of the meeting. On the following day a Hindu dinner was served to 50 guests.

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On Sunday, March 1st, at the Vedanta Society of New York, special Services were held in commemoration of the birthday of Sri Rama Krishna. Fruits and sweets were distributed after each service.

A Hindu Dinner was held on Sunday, March 8th, at the Ceylon India Inn. Rev. Eliot White and Mrs. White were among the guests of honor. Mr. White and some other guests whose spirits moved them at this occasion, expressed their appreciation of the Life and Teachings of the Blessed Master, in fitting terms. Everybody was deeply impressed by the spiritual atmosphere of the room.

* * * * *

The birthday Festivals of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda were observed at the other centres also.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. It is taught: "Do not care for praise." However, a child who is naturally slow to learn, if praised when successful, will be stimulated to greater effort and do better. Does not the end justify the means?

A. Praise may encourage a child to persevere; may be an incentive to work and thus facilitate progress; but, while we praise the child we should at the same time teach him that it is better to be able to work, or to do his duty, without praise. The desire for praise is weakening and demoralizing. Why should he depend upon the applause of men to be stimulated into action? We should teach the child to be independent; to learn to work for work's sake; to be unaffected alike by the praise or the blame of the world; to be conscientious, moral and good; above all, to be manly. Help that comes from without is small (no) help. True help comes from within; from the awakening of the Self.

Q. Please explain why the theory of the compassionate creation is arguing in a circle?

A. We cannot reasonably ascribe the creation of the world with all its suffering, to a Lord who is nevertheless supposed to be loving and gracious. The doctrine of a Supreme Being who acts from compassion fails to meet either of the two alternatives. Does He act thus be-

fore or after creation? If you say before, how can there be any need—as there is no creation—or desire to free living beings from pain? (which is the main characteristic of compassion). If you adopt the other alternative you will be arguing in a circle; for, on the one hand, you will hold that God created the world through compassion, and, on the other hand, that he compassionated it after He had created it.

Q. Does Vedanta teach migration of the soul?

A. Yes; in the Katha-Upanishad, Yama teaches Nachikita that the individual souls go to a higher or lower state of existence according to their merits or demerits. Again in the Gita, Sri Krishna says: "As a man having cast off worn-out clothes, takes others that are new, so does the body-owning soul give up worn-out bodies and get into others that are new." "Votaries of the gods go to the gods; to the Pitris (departed ancestors) go the votaries of the Pitris; to the Bhutas (spirits) go the worshippers of the Bhutas. My worshippers come to myself."

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

*"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"*

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

Vol. I.

MAY, 1931

No. 5

PRAYERS

(Hymns to the Divine Mother)

Our salutations are to the Divine Mother who dwells
in all beings as Energy.

Our salutations are to the Divine Mother who dwells
in all beings as Intelligence.

Our salutations are to the Divine Mother who dwells
in all beings as Peace.

Thou who art goddess of fortune Herself in the homes
of the righteous. Thou who art dispenser of misfortune
in the homes of the unrighteous. Thou art know-
ledge in the hearts of the wise. Thou who art goodness
of the good. Thou who art modesty of the well-bred
families. We salute Thee, Oh Divine Mother! May
Thou protect us all!



Be Thou propitious to us, Oh Mother, who alone can destroy our misery! Thou art the supreme object of worship of the dwellers upon the three-fold world. Grant us Thy blessing!

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

On Diversity of Human Nature

Man is like a pillow-case. The color of one pillow-case may be red, that of another black and so on, but all contain the same cotton. So it is with man—one is handsome, another is ugly, a third pious, a fourth wicked, but the Divine One dwells within them all.

One meets with two classes of men; the nature of one resembles that of the winnowing fan and of the other that of the sieve. Just as the winnowing basket rejects the useless (husk) and keeps the useful (grain), so there is one class of men who reject what is worthless (gold, lust, etc.) and accept the Lord, who alone is worth having. Again as the sieve rejects the finer parts of a substance and keeps the coarser, so there is another class of men who reject what alone is worth having, and instead accept gold, lust, etc.

As when fishes are caught in a net, some do not struggle at all but remain calm in the net, some again struggle hard to come out of the net but fail in the attempt, while a third set actually effect their escape by rending

the net; so there are three classes of men in this world;—the bound (*baddha*), the struggling (*mumukshu*) and the released (*mukta*).

VIVEKANANDA—THE ASPOSTLE OF STRENGTH

(*By Swami Nirvedananda*)

Be it as a monk or a preacher, as a patriot or a reformer, as a philosopher or a social worker, Swami Vivekananda was characterized by remarkable strength and fearlessness that always left an indelible impression on all who came under his influence in some form or other. And rightly has he been called a fighting monk, a dynamic preacher, an intrepid patriot, a fearless reformer, an incontestable philosopher and a dauntless social servant. It has been said that like a cyclone he swept away men and women by the mighty power of his eloquence; like a thunderbolt he fell upon the ignorant critic and overpowered him completely; like a bomb shell he threw himself upon society and pulverized the incrustations of ignorance and superstition; like a dynamo he electrified all who came in close touch with his wonderful personality, and roused them from passivity into activity. His ideal of religion was dynamic but universal, his program of reform was constructive but liberal, his plan of social service was active but selfless.

All these were expressions of a tremendous power that comes only to one who knowing the Highest Truth, has become fearless and invincible; and these could be followed only by those who possessed a heart that knew no weakness or fear. Indeed, Swami Vivekananda was a veritable embodiment of strength, and it was but natural that he should become the apostle of a gospel of strength and fearlessness that is bringing about a revolution in the life and thought of many in India and abroad.

His Man-Making Religion

To mankind blinded by ignorance and superstition, dehumanised by tyranny and oppression, and hypnotised by the sense of weakness and helplessness, the Swami brought the rejuvenation message of strength and hope. With a heart melting with love and sympathy for others, he cried out—"Strength is the one thing needful. Strength is the medicine which the poor must have when tyrannised over by the rich. Strength is the medicine that the ignorant must have when oppressed by the learned; and it is the medicine that sinners must have when tyrannised over by other sinners—it is man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. Anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually, reject it as poison, there is no life in it; it cannot be true. Truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating." And the source of this strength is the consciousness that the real man in us is not a mere clod of earth, nor a bundle

of ideas, but is the Spirit Eternal, the source of all power, purity and knowledge. In this glorious doctrine of the potential Divinity of man, did the Swami found a new spiritual power able to create a new epoch of renaissance and reconstruction in human society. The rank materialist, the scoffing agnostic, the thoughtless fanatic, the jealous missionary—all attacked him with great vehemence. But in the face of all oppositions and criticisms he proclaimed his message with a boldness and strength that made itself felt by foes and friends alike. His teachings to the Westerner and to the Indian were essentially the same, though in certain respects they varied as to their details and application. He prized truth more than anything else in the world, and always spoke the truth, without trying in the least to suppress or distort it for the sake of winning the praise and support of others. He frankly admired the merits and virtues of all peoples and their cultures, and pointed out at the same time their faults and defects in unmistakable terms. And the one object he always had in view was to make man a true man, and woman a true woman.

His Message to the West

The Swami was a great admirer of the Westerner's art and science, his active temperament, his spirit of independence and his power of organization. But he could never close his eyes to the horrors of Western civilization. Inordinate craving for material achievement, mad rush for world supremacy, reckless subjection

and exploitation of weaker peoples, mutual jealousy and hatred—all these have converted the land of the Occidental nations into a vast military camp. With his clear vision the Swami saw the danger ahead, and said to his countrymen, "The whole of the Western world is on a volcano which may burst to-morrow, go to pieces to-morrow. They have searched every corner of the world and have found no respite. They have drunk deep of the cup of pleasure and found it vanity. Now is the time to work so that India's spiritual ideas may penetrate deep into the West." He also noted with great solicitude the religious intolerance, the social shams, the political hypocrisies and the cruel and predatory tendency prevalent in the Western nations. He further found out that their apparent strength was a clear indication of spiritual poverty and weakness, and therefore he spoke to them of nothing but the words of strength. He boldly asked the Westerner to be true to the spirit of his religion, to show his undue importance of the conception of sin and to realise the ideals of universalism, potential Divinity of man, and spiritual solidarity of mankind—the three essential doctrines of the Vedanta which is both religion and philosophy. The Swami carried to the Western mind not only these, but also other new, and equally bold ideas and ideals. In place of the Christian theological doctrines of one birth, creation out of nothing and eternal damnation, he presented the Hindu ideas of re-incarnation, evolution and salvation for all. To a world accustomed to hear of Christianity as the only

true religion, he brought the astounding message that all religions were true. "Help, not fight," "Assimilation and not destruction," "Harmony and peace and not dissension"—this was the burden of his teachings to the West.

His Service to India

Great has been the good that the Swami did to the West, but greater still has been the service he rendered to his motherland. If he opened the eyes of the Westerners to new truths sure to have far-reaching effects, he brought to his countrymen a new awakening that is calculated to influence the entire world. The force with which this spiritual giant moved the West reacted on India with a tremendous power and stirred the very depths of Indian Society. The hypnosis of political and cultural subjection made the Indians forget the glory of their ancient heritage, and look upon themselves as weak and helpless. And in frantic despair did many of them try to inoculate themselves with the lymph of Western culture cleverly placed before them by the self-seeking imperialists who devised the present educational system of the land. At such a momentous hour he appeared on the platform of the Chicago Parliament of Religions, revealed the eternal truths of Hinduism to the wondering West, and at once won thousands as true staunch followers and admirers. He thus raised the Indians not only in the estimation of the Occidentals but also in that of their

own. And when he returned to his motherland, and thundered forth his great message to his countrymen, reminding them of their past greatness, pointing out to them unsparingly their evils and defects, urging them to give up their debasing feelings of weakness and impotency and manifest their manhood and power, the Indians came to realise along with the superb greatness of the Swami, also something of their own potentiality as a nation. Indeed the clarion call of the Swami has brought in India a new sense of self-respect and self-reliance, a new national consciousness, the central theme of which is the manifestation of Indian manhood in all its manifold aspects, physical, intellectual and spiritual.

His Message to His Countrymen

The Swami asked his co-religionists and compatriots to practice the habit of 'thinking backward' and also to make a passionate effort for 'living forward'. He held that a people that forgets its glorious past cannot hope to have any bright future. And he roused the historic consciousness of his countrymen with a view to create in them an unshakable faith in themselves, a faith that is a sure guarantee for future greatness. By greatness, however, he never understood mere political power or economic supremacy, but individual and collective self-realisation that finds its fulfillment in the domain of the spirit, and manifests itself in an all-round service, national as well as international. Thus the ideal he

placed before his people was not a mere revival of the past, but the creation of a living present that is sure to usher in a new era of progress and glory. The source of this inspiration the Swami found in the inspiring teachings of the Upanishads. It is therefore that he thundered forth—"Back to the Upanishads. Back to the strengthening, life-giving teachings of the Upanishads. . . . What we want is strength, strength and every time strength. And the Upanishads are the great mine of this strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energised through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable and the down-trodden of all races, all creeds and all sects, to stand on their feet and be free; freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanishads." A practical Vedantin that he was, he based his gospel of strength on the doctrine of the Atman—the infinite, omnipresent and omniscient spirit dwelling in all. If man is the Atman, he need not eternally depend on others in his helplessness. He should, instead, stand on his own strength, and declare that he is deathless and eternal, untouched by the miseries and pains, troubles and tribulations of the world. The ideally strong man, according to the Swami, is he who possesses that high spiritual mood in which he laughs at both life and death, and has along with it "muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic will which nothing can resist." And he himself stands as the perfect embodiment of the ideal he held be-

fore his country and the world. Great was the stress he laid on physical and mental strength along with the spiritual. It is not for the weakling and the coward to understand the highest truths of religion; the fearless and heroic alone can appreciate them. And he gave expression to this startling idea in his famous Madras lecture—Vedanta in its Application to Indian Life. "Be strong, my young friends, that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and mighty strength of Sri Krishna with a little strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman when your body stands firm upon your feet and you feel yourselves as men. Not by the help of others but by the energy of Indians themselves should India rise."

Conquering the Conqueror

Swami Vivekananda asked his countrymen to stand on their own strength and also to further the spiritual mission of their motherland. From time immemorial, he pointed out, India, the home of religion and philosophy, has been a conqueror of conquerors. Innumerable foreign races and tribes, who invaded the land tempted by its riches and wealth, came under the influence of its religion and culture, and were either completely assimi-

lated into the body of Hindu Society, or were so remarkably transformed that they came to differ greatly in their thoughts and outlook from their co-religionists in their native lands. In the past the field of conquest was the soil of India itself, but now it has extended to lands beyond the seas. By Divine grace the Swami Vivekananda—the intrepid child of Mother India—went to “beard the lion in his den”, and began a new era of “the conquest of the world by Indian thought”, of conquering the alien conqueror also in his own home. But the Swami was not a narrow and exclusive nationalist. This great preacher of “aggressive Hinduism” knew in his heart of hearts that the assertion of individuality, assimilation of new elements and expansion of the field of activity are the signs of a vigorous life. Hence when he asked his countrymen to stem the tide of the invasion by Western thoughts, and preserve their cultural integrity, he also urged them to learn from the West her arts and sciences, and to give her in return the spiritual truths so very essential for saving her soul from being overpowered by the national ideals of life. And he used the terms “aggressive” and “conquest” in their highest possible sense. The ideal he held before himself and the world was one of “give and take”, of the exchange and assimilation of mutual ideals by both the East and the West. “You go to England,” he said to his countrymen, “but that is in the garb of a beggar praying for education. Why? Have you nothing to give them? An inestimable treasure you have, which you can give,—give them your religion, give

them your philosophy! From time immemorial India has been the mine of precious ideas, to human society; giving birth to high ideas herself, she has freely distributed them broadcast over the whole world. Give these valuable gems in exchange for what you receive from them." Indeed, fearlessness, self-respect, service at home and abroad, with the Divine as the goal of life and the source of all inspiration,—in one word, "Strength"—this has been the dominating note that permeated the life and teachings of the Swami. Fearless and intrepid as he was, he delivered his message in his fearless and intrepid way. And very happily does he himself speak of it in his memorable words—"Bold has been my message to the people of the West, bolder is my message to you, my beloved countrymen. The message of ancient India to the new Western nations I have tried my best to voice—ill done or well done the future is sure to show, but the mighty voice of the same future is already sending forth soft but distinct murmurs, gaining strength as the days go by, the message of India that is to be—to India as she is at present."

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY
or
THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF YOGA
(*By the Editor*)

Emerson once said: "It is easy to live in the world, according to its own opinion. It is easy to live in solitude, according to one's own opinion, but that man is great who can maintain with sweetness the independence of solitude in the midst of the crowd of the world."

Just now we are having an illustration of it. That is, this noise in the street. If we can maintain calmness of mind in the midst of all the noise and tumult of the street, then would it be proof that we possess that power, that poise, that peace.

Therefore, we must endeavor to practice spirituality all the time. No matter where we are, whether we are in the cave or in the closet, or in the corner, or in the street, or in the battle-field, we must know the secret of maintaining our inner poise and inner peace in the midst of all these varying circumstances. In other words, we must be spiritual in the street as well as in the retreat. And it is my intention, this morning, to present the secret of practical spirituality or the positive aspect of Yoga to you.

Many people have the notion that Yoga means annihilation; that it leads to a state of vacuity or nothingness. But Yoga, as the great teachers of India have understood it, means addition, acquisition or achieve-

ment. There is no negative element in Yoga. It is a process of evolution and by following this process one finally attains to that which is whole and infinite. In the perfected state of Yoga, the individual becomes the universal. The individual's consciousness, which is so limited and finite, becomes immersed into that supreme universal consciousness. Edwin Arnold has described this state as "a dew-drop slipping into the shining ocean". To this point I shall come later.

Life must be a combination of action and inaction, like the rolling ball. When you see a ball rolling on the floor, it is in motion and at the same time at rest. A certain point is all the time at rest, while outwardly it is rolling. Even so, our life must be balanced; we must rest inwardly all the time in God, or in the ideal, while we must be outwardly active. Says Krishna, "No one can live even for one moment without doing some kind of action." But while one must act physically, one must know how to remain mentally in peace. There we find the real Yoga. He has also defined Yoga as efficiency or skillfulness in action. This efficiency does not necessarily imply power or ability to achieve in quantity. It must not be measured in terms of mass or magnitude, but in terms of inner calmness and purity of intention. He really knows the secret of action who can make all his works subservient to a higher ideal rather than to his own lower selfish self. He knows the secret of work who knows how to achieve the greatest result by the minimum expenditure of energy. There we find the

secret of success, or efficiency in action. This efficiency does not mean only physical energy and activity; it lies largely in mental calmness. That is, that calmness which enables one to grasp the nature of the action one has in hand, and also to perform that action without worry or anxiety, with perfect serenity and collectedness. This is the meaning of that efficiency or skillfulness which Krishna calls 'Kousala'.

I have read no work in Sanskrit which has expounded this doctrine which I call philosophy of conduct, or secret of action, more clearly and conclusively than the lessons of the Gita. You all know these lessons were taught in the field of battle on the eve of a war—a most horrible work. That shows how Krishna wanted to impress upon his disciple the value of unselfish action. He asked him to engage in that terrible work and at the same time to perform it with the greatest amount of equanimity and unselfishness.

A most interesting feature of the lessons of the Gita is their practical application to life. I call it applied wisdom. That is, Krishna, as a prophet, a great seer, did not overlook the realities of this life. He taught the most practical lessons; lessons that are useful to us in our daily life. He never advocated absolute non-resistance, but, at the same time, he recognized the moral and spiritual values of non-resistance or forgiveness. Yet he knew that we must not practice forgiveness or non-resistance indiscriminately.

I do not know how to express my appreciation of

these lessons. Their keynote is renunciation. But in them, Krishna has given us a most unique idea of renunciation. In the sixth and seventh verses of the third book, he has given us an outline of his conception of renunciation. "He who does not work with the senses of action but retains in his mind the thought of the objects of the senses, that man is of false character. He is self-deluded. But he who has restrained all his senses of action and perception and at the same time remains engaged in work—not to achieve something selfish but for the good of others—he knows the secret of renunciation." Thus, renunciation according to Krishna, is not a mere physical or outer isolation, or non-attachment, but it is mental non-attachment. It is spiritual severance, through perfection—realization. In that perfected state of renunciation we can find inaction in action; because then we can remain in that which does not act—the spirit, eternal, absolute and infinite. And, remaining in that consciousness of non-action, we can perform action. There are many people who do not act because action means exercise, physical and mental. They are fond of laziness and indolence. And because they are lazy and because they are afraid of work, they advocate that sort of false renunciation. Those who are not afraid of work, who know that the spirit does not work, remain untouched by the results of action. In order to realize that state of perfect renunciation, we must work for the good of others. Through action alone can we reach that state of absolute non-action.

(To be continued)

The VEDANTA SOCIETY

is a Religious body, having for
its objects:

- 1) To disseminate the Ethics and Religion of the Vedas through Logic and Reason.
- 2) To indicate the Oneness of the Origin and Goal of all Religions.
- 3) To promote Sympathy and Harmony among mankind on the basic principle of Unity of Life and of God.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

*"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"*

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

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JUNE, 1931

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PRAYERS

She who is the first creation of the Creator; She who carries the oblation of clarified butter; She who is the performer of holy rites; the two others who ordain time (day and night); She who pervades the Universe making the objects of hearing perceptible; She who is known as Prakriti—the primal cause); She who animates all creatures: May Isa (the Lord) protect you all by those eight benignant forms of His Shakti!

* * * * *

She who shines with a garland of snow-white flowers; She who wears a white mantle over her body; She who holds the holy Vina in her arms; She who is seated upon a white lotus; She who is always worshipped by Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver) and Shiva (the Destroyer) and other gods:—May that Blessed Mother Sarasvati, the destroyer of all ignorance, protect us evermore!

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

On emptiness of Powers

A certain person had a sudden fit of renunciation. He told his friends that the world had ceased to have any attraction for him and he wished at once to retire into solitude to meditate upon God. They readily assented to his laudable proposal. So he left home, and having reached a holy place, went through austere devotional exercises for twelve long years. Having by this means acquired some psychic power he returned home. His friends were very glad to meet him after so long a time and, in course of conversation, asked him what knowledge he had acquired by his long penance. An elephant was passing by. He advanced towards him, touched his body and pronounced these words: "Die instantly, you elephant." Instantly the animal ceased to show any signs of life. Shortly afterwards he touched the elephant again and pronounced these words: "Be alive, you elephant" and directly the animal was alive once more. He next went to the bank of the river that flowed by his house and having repeated some mantras (occult formulae), walked across the river and returned in the same way. His friends were very much struck by his performance; all the same they could not forbear from saying to him, "Brother, your performance has been to no purpose. What is it to you whether the elephant lives or dies? And as for walking on the river, which you have accomplished after twelve years' hard labor,

we do it by paying a penny to the boatman. So you see you have simply wasted your labors." These sarcastic comments brought him to his senses and he asked himself, "Really, what good have my psychic powers done me?" With these words he left home once more,—this time to seek for God by austere devotional exercises.

SERMON SENTENCES

Religion is a process of progress. It is infinite in both ways.

Religion is neither intellectual nor emotional, but spiritual.

Religion is neither faith nor philosophy but knowledge.

Religion is man's relation to his ideal and his final realization of it.

Religion is evolutionary and not mandatory. It must be unfolded from within.

Religion is made for man and not man for religion.

There are as many religions as there are individuals.

No self-respecting person should belong to any dogmatic religion which seeks to deprive him of his right to think and reason for himself.

Religion is not mere belief in doctrines but realization of the Truth in life and its practice in thought, deeds and words.

THE RELATION OF HINDUISM TO BUDDHISM

From an address by Swami Vivekananda

The relation between Hinduism (by Hinduism I mean the religion of the Vedas) and what is called Buddhism at the present day is nearly the same as between Judaism and Christianity. Jesus Christ was a Jew and Sakya Muni (Buddha) was a Hindu, but with this difference: The Jews rejected Jesus Christ, nay, crucified Him and the Hindu has exalted Sakya Muni to the seat of Divinity and worships Him. Sakya Muni came to preach nothing new. He also, like Jesus, came to fulfill and not destroy, reversing the order of positions—making the Jew come down to the New Testament and the Christian go up to the Old Testament; and as the Jew did not understand the fulfillment of the Old Testament, so the Buddhist did not understand the fulfillment of the truths of the Hindu religion. Again I repeat, Sakya Muni came not to destroy, but he was the fulfillment, the logical conclusion, the logical development of the religion of the Hindus.

In religion there is no caste. Caste is a social condition. Sakya Muni himself was a monk, and to his glory he had the large-heartedness to bring out the truth from the hidden Vedas and throw it broadcast all over the world. He was the first being in the world who brought missionarizing into practice—nay, he was the first to

conceive the idea of proselytizing. The great glory of the Master lay in his wonderful sympathy for everybody especially for the ignorant and the poor. Some of his disciples were Brahmins. When Buddha was teaching Sanskrit was no more the spoken language in India. It was then only in the books of the learned. Some of Buddha's Brahmin disciples wanted to translate his teachings into Sanskrit, but he steadily told them, "I am for the poor, for the people, let me speak in the tongue of the people." So to this day the great bulk of his teachings are in the vernacular of that day in India.

Whatever may be the position of philosophy, whatever may be the position of metaphysics, so long as there is such a thing as death in the world, so long as there is such a thing as weakness in the human heart, so long as there is a cry going out of the heart of man in his very weakness, there shall be a faith in God. On the philosophic side the disciples of the great Master dashed themselves against the eternal rocks of the Vedas and could not crush them, as on the other hand they took away from the nation that eternal God to which every man and woman clings so fondly. And the result was that Buddhism had to die its natural death in India, and at the present day there is not one man or woman who calls himself a Buddhist in India, the mother-land of its birth. On the other hand, Brahminism lost something—that reforming zeal, that wonderful sympathy and charity for everybody, that wonderful leaven which Buddhism brought into the masses and which rendered Indian society so great that a Greek historian who writes about

India was led to say that no Hindu was known to tell an untruth and no Hindu woman was known to be unchaste.

We cannot live without you (Buddhists), nor you without us. Then believe, that separation has shown to us, that you cannot stand without the brain and philosophy of the Brahmin, nor we without your heart. Let us then join the wonderful intellect of the Brahmin with the heart, the noble soul, the wonderful humanizing power of the great Master.

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

or

THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF YOGA

By the Editor

The philosophy of work is further elaborated in the eighteenth verse of the fourth chapter: "He, who sees action in inaction and inaction in action, is the wisest of men. He is a great Yogi, and he attains to the fruits of all actions." Now it sounds like a paradox "to see action in inaction and inaction in action". We can find inaction in action by knowing that Brahman is eternally free from action and we are essentially Brahman. If we know this secret of action, we can make all our works subservient to God rather than to our own selfish selves. Whenever an action is performed with a selfish

motive at its back, it is bad. But if it is done, not for the selfish interest, but with a loving and devotional spirit, for the satisfaction of God or man, it does not produce any bondage. So by knowing that secret and working in that spirit, we can avoid the reaction of action.

It is the spirit in which the action is done that counts and matters. It is not the outer magnificence or magnitude that is important. But it is the inner purity with which the action is done that makes the action truly noble and spiritual. There we find the psychological necessity in action. Many people perform meritorious deeds because they want to do good to other people. But in our actual lives we sometimes find such actions compatible with wickedness. There are many people who are wicked, even immoral, yet they may sometimes do good deeds. We see many people give money to build churches, roads, schools, etc., but they are not mentally clean or pure. But here, in these lessons that you find in the Gita, Krishna has taught that it is not the doing alone—the result or the outer achievement, in terms of bulk or magnitude, or magnificence—but it is the inner purity, the purity of thought and intention that makes our deeds great and noble and productive of the best results.

I told you in the beginning, the Yogi knows how to produce the greatest result with the least energy. He does not waste his energy and time on worry and excitement. We always get excited when we have to do something, but he is always calm and collected. And

because he is calm and contemplative, he knows the way by which the greatest results can be achieved. And mark my words, the greatness of these results does not lie in their amount or magnificence, but in the attitude or disposition of the worker. I, personally, believe in such things as successful failures, or magnificent failures. That is, a person whose intention is pure, whose thought is clean and who is humble and alert, who always wants to do something to serve others, that man accomplishes greatest success by that very attitude, and not those who do not possess that inner calmness, who do not possess that inner purity, but can produce results outwardly. Krishna has given us a unique idea of the philosophy of conduct. He has put greater emphasis upon the development of the right attitude in our action than upon the mere result that can be measured in terms of length and breadth and thickness. That idea he has further expounded in another definition of Yoga: "Samattva". That is, this spirit of action or this right disposition is a factor which enables one to remain superior to all pairs of opposites, such as success and failure. "One who possesses that right disposition is not in the least affected by the consequences of his deeds, be they good or bad. Sometimes people who are good have their enemies; they have traducers and slanderers. But he who possesses right purpose the remarks of the enemy do not in the least affect him. And at the same time, if people praise him, he is not in the least affected by that praise. There we find the real significance of action, and we can never live one moment without doing action. When we are

asleep the involuntary nerves have to act. Since we cannot avoid action entirely, it is right for us to develop this attitude and to so work that the work may be made into worship. That is the meaning of Karma Yoga. We must know how to convert our work into worship.

There are many people who think that position is more important than disposition. Many people care more for the outer condition of results or accomplishment than the inner attitude that must govern all our actions. I for one believe that a person who occupies a low position but is honest and pure and clean and unselfish, that man is a far nobler citizen in every respect than a man who occupies a high position but is unclean and accepts bribes. The man who is a street-cleaner, if he is honest and clean within, I will worship him more readily than the other man. He may occupy a high position, but he is unclean in thought.

In these lessons we find a new outlook of life. We finally know how to adjust our lives to that great ideal this great master, Sri Krishna, presents to us. That is, the whole argument can be boiled down to this point: In our daily life, in our practical life, we must be alert all the time to see that the inside is clean and pure and right, not the outside only. Of course, if we can make both sides clean, that is the best. But I for one would rather have a clean thought, a clean disposition and spirit behind all my actions, than a high position with a dirty and unclean mind. We find some beautiful stories in the Mahabharata which illustrate this point. Most of you have heard the name of Dharma Byadha—

'Holy Butcher'. In India the butcher's trade is considered most abominable, but this butcher was a great saint in spite of his trade. He exemplifies how true greatness lies not in the profession, or the business, or the trade, but in the thought, in the disposition, in the spirit. He did that work without being in the least attached to it. He knew the secret of renunciation. That is, his inside was clean, holy and spiritual while he did his work.

We find further description of the spirit of Karma Yoga in the ninth chapter of the Gita: "Whoever, consecrating the fruits of action to Brahman, can live in this world like the lotus leaf which floats in the water but is never soaked with water, no blame can attach to him." In these lessons Krishna has taught us how to live in this world without being of it. There we find the practical and positive aspect of Yoga.

I shall tell you another story to further illustrate this point—that it is not the position but the disposition that makes the action truly great and noble. There lived a great king named Janaka. He was a kingly saint, and knew that the kingdom did not belong to him while he ruled it. He practiced spirituality through work. He lived just like that lotus leaf. He had his servants, palace, treasury, etc., but knew those things did not belong to him. He performed his duties without attachment; never neglecting them. There we find the spirit of renunciation. He attained knowledge through unselfish work. He did not postpone that knowledge to the life hereafter. This king was a practical man in every sense. Once there was a great fire in his Capitol.



Note what he said: "If this beautiful city of Mithila (the name of his Capitol) is burned to ashes, that will make me neither a gainer nor a loser." Here again we find another beautiful point. There are some people who have the notion that if they suffer privation and loss, then alone can they be kept in the path of righteousness. Of course, there are others who want to gain everything in this life to be happy. Both are wrong. The true path lies between the extremes, in the balance. That is the reason why Janaka said "If this Capitol is destroyed that will not make me a gainer or a loser." Once a young student went to him to study. His father was Vyasa, a great sage himself. But he sent this young son to King Janaka for initiation. Janaka, by his Yoga power, read the thought of this student. The young man had no possessions, and was not married. He naturally had the thought that he was holier than all others, and the King had read that thought before he arrived at his Capitol. He knew that he was coming, and in order to give him a surprise, the King received him in his most gorgeous apparel, adorned with pearls and wearing his crown. That is, he appeared most luxurious when he received him. When the young man saw him, he was terribly shocked and disappointed. "Why has my father sent me to this man! He does not practice renunciation." King Janaka remembered this, and one day when he was teaching him, he heard a noise outside. There was a great fire in the Capitol, and everybody was running away. He was in a chamber of the palace, remaining calm all the time. And this young man took his leave

to go to his own room to see that his small belongings were not destroyed by the fire. He had a few pieces of cloth and a blanket. When he arose to go away, Janaka said: "My young friend, when you came to me you had this thought—that you were coming to a man who could not teach you Yoga; and you also had the notion that you were a great renouncer. This whole city is burning. All those beautiful things are being reduced to ashes and I am teaching you; while you, having those little things, are breaking away to take care of them." This young man was ashamed when he found himself out. Janaka's was real renunciation. That should be our ideal. That is, we must not attach any importance to these external conditions. We must be practical. We must be able to realize and enjoy the bliss of Yoga, of divine union, all the time, whether it is a Sunday or a Monday, or morning or evening, in the street or the retreat.

We believe that we cannot be saints or holy men and women by attending the church on Sunday and doing all sorts of other things on week-days. Every moment of life must be a moment of union, of realization, no matter whether we are eating or walking or sleeping or praying. We must always remain united with Brahman. There we find the positive aspect of Yoga. We must try to convert all these works into worship of God; whether we are praised or blamed, whether we are honored or insulted: these are absolutely unimportant. Let all these conditions happen, but all the time we should remain united with our God, our ideal. In that way we

must develop the Yoga of "Samattwa"—equability. We must know in the light of that understanding, the secret of action—that is, how to live in this world without being of it; how to destroy the animal in us and manifest the divine; and how to achieve the greatest spiritual result through the least expenditure of energy. This is the definition of Yoga in the Upanishads: "That perfect control of the mind and the senses in which one becomes free from all delusion and ignorance, is known as Yoga." In that there is both gain and loss, or addition and subtraction. There is the addition of purity, poise and peace, and there is the subtraction or absence of their opposites. In the perfect state of Yoga there is this acquisition and addition. And when we can attain to that inner poise and calm, then and then alone can we know the secret of action: how to live in this world without letting worldliness live in us.

CHHANDOGYA — UPANISHAD

Tenth Khanda

Upakosala Kamalayana dwelt as a Brahmacharin (religious student) in the house of Satyakama Jabala. He tended his fires for twelve years. But the teacher, though he allowed other pupils (after they had learnt the sacred books) to depart to their own homes, did not allow Upakosala to depart.

Then his wife said to him: 'This student, who is quite

exhausted (with austerities), has carefully tended your fires. Let not the fires themselves blame you, but teach him.' The teacher, however, went away on a journey without having taught him.

The student from sorrow was not able to eat. Then the wife of the teacher said to him: 'Student, eat! Why do you not eat?' He said: 'There are many desires in this man here, which lose themselves in different directions. I am full of sorrows, and shall take no food.'

Thereupon the fires said among themselves: 'This student, who is quite exhausted, has carefully tended us. Well, let us teach him.' They said to him:

'Breath is Brahman, Ka (pleasure) is Brahman, Kha (ether) is Brahman.'

He said: 'I understand that breath is Brahman, but I do not understand Ka or Kha.'

They said: 'What is Ka is Kha, what is Kha is Ka.' They therefore taught him Brahman as breath, and as the ether (in the heart).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. How did the teachings of Krishna differ from those of Buddha?

A. Essentially there is no difference between the teachings of Krishna and Buddha. Buddha taught the masses, while Krishna taught both the classes and the masses. Buddha's teachings are a part of Krishna's teachings. Krishna is the harmonizer of creeds. Buddha

taught what the time needed. If Krishna is the whole, Buddha is the part. Their teachings never differ, but fulfill one another.

Q. Have any of the revelations of Samadhi disagreed fundamentally with scientific learning?

A. No. Knowledge is one. The difference lies in the manifestations. Scientific knowledge is the reflection or echo of the absolute knowledge. In Samadhi a man becomes one with the absolute knowledge. The revelations of Samadhi, being the offspring of that supreme knowledge, cannot disagree with scientific learning. The Hindu Scriptures say, "All learnings, spiritual or otherwise, proceed from God."

Q. Is not Vedanta as taught by the disciples of Ramakrishna considered the most advanced religion and philosophy in India by the Hindus?

A. The Hindus believe that a great person is the product of the age. He comes to fulfill the necessities of the time. Hence they look upon Ramakrishna as the great spiritual leader of the age, and consider his teachings as interpreted by his disciples as the most advanced thought of present-day India. Ramakrishna's disciples represent his teachings by their life and character. They proclaim Ramakrishna as they understand Him, and lay more stress upon the truth he taught than upon his personal side. They tell people to take him in the light of their own understanding.

PRAYERS

Salutations to Lord Krishna

Thou art the Primal Deva, the ancient Purusha:

Thou art the supreme abode of all this universe;

Thou art the Knower and the Knowable and the

Supreme State: By Thee is all pervaded;

O Being of infinite forms!

Thou art Vayu (wind), Yama (ruler of destiny), Agni (fire), and Varuna (water): Thou art Shashanka (moon), Prajapati (the first progenitor) and Prapitamaha (the great-Grandfather): Hail! Hail to Thee! A thousand times and again hail to Thee!

I salute Thee before: I salute Thee behind:

I salute Thee on all sides, O All!

Thou, infinite in power and infinite in glory,

pervadest all! Wherefore Thou art All.

* * *

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:

We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.

May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.

Vol. I.

JULY, 1931

No. 7

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

on

*Religion is Realization, and not a Matter of
Philosophic Discussion.*

How long does one need to discuss the contents of the Scriptures? Only until one has succeeded in seeing the Lord. The bee will buzz so long as it does not settle upon the flower. As soon as it begins to drink of the honey all buzzing ceases.

Once two men went into an orchard. One was worldly-wise. As soon as he entered the gate, he began to count the number of mango trees, the number of mangoes each tree bore etc., and calculate what might be the price of the orchard. His companion, who was different from him, went to the owner, made his acquaintance, and quickly going under a mango tree began to pick the fruits and eat them with the owner's consent. Now, who is the wiser of the two? Eat mangoes, it will satisfy your hunger. What is the good of counting the leaves and making useless calculations. The proud man of intellect is busy with all sorts of vain discussions and controversies regarding God, while the humble man of wisdom having received God's grace enjoys supreme bliss in this world.

EXTRACT

From a letter by Swami Vivekananda

For a religion to be effective, enthusiasm is necessary. At the same time we must try to avoid the danger of multiplying creeds. We avoid that by being a non-sectarian sect, having all the advantages of a sect and the broadness of a universal religion.

We preach neither social equality nor inequality, but that every being has the same right, and we insist upon freedom of thought in every way. We reject none, neither theist, pantheist, monist, polytheist, agnostic nor atheist; the only condition of being a disciple is modelling a character at once the broadest and the most intense.

We leave everybody free to know, select and follow whatever suits and helps him. Each is welcome to his own peculiarity, but he has no right to criticise the conduct of others because that would, if followed by him, injure him; much less to insist that others should follow his way. A wife may help some in their progress, to others she may be a positive injury. But the unmarried man has no right to say that the married disciple is wrong, much less to force his own ideal of morality upon his brother.

We believe that every being is divine, is God. Every soul is a sun covered over with clouds of ignorance; the difference between soul and soul is due to the difference in density of these layers of clouds. . . . We believe that it is the duty of every Soul to treat, think of and behave to other Souls as such, i.e. as Gods, and not to hate or despise or vilify or try to injure them by any manner or means. This is the duty not only of the Sannyasin but of all men and women.

RESURRECTION: Physical, Natural and Spiritual

By the Editor

The day is not far off when all superstition shall be replaced by knowledge and reason, when all man-made laws shall be superseded by divine law, when all poverty shall be supplanted by plenty.

There are two ways of explaining facts. There is the empirical, or the objective way and there is the metaphysical, or the subjective way. It is the nature of the ignorant mind to recognize concrete objects, objects that exist through time and space. Then the other method of looking at facts consists in going deep into the very core of the thing. Those who follow the first method ascribe the cause of a phenomenon not to the thing itself, but to something outside itself. But those who follow the metaphysical method seek for the cause, not in something outside of the thing, but in the thing itself. Newton watched the falling of an apple. Many people saw that phenomenon before, but it was reserved for him to determine the cause of the falling of the apple. The apple fell from the tree on account of its own weight, its gravity. The great scientist Watt watched the boiling of water in a kettle, and he saw the lid of the kettle forced out by the steam, and finally invented the steam engine. That is the characteristic of the scientific, or the metaphysical, or the subjective method. Ignorant people ascribe the cause of sickness to external conditions, but the real cause of sickness is in the individual himself. That is, the individual's own weakness or lack of resistance is the cause of the sickness.

So we see how far apart these two methods of looking at facts and phenomena are. That explains why some people seek to expound the teachings of great prophets and masters, and the rules and doctrines of the scriptures, in a literal form. Take for instance this most famous word "religion." According to the followers of a special religion, "religion" means their own religion — that is, that particular set of doctrines and dogmas that they know, is the only religion. And the reason for that narrowness or lack of understanding is not hard to see.

Take another word, "God." To many faithful people God means a person, a big man with infinite power — that is their settled belief. If you try to explain to them that God is not only a person, but a principle, they will not accept your explanation; they will think you are crazy, that you don't know what God is. So when this broad light of reason will be thrown on our path, then perhaps shall we be able to interpret all those beautiful words and thoughts in a more philosophical and universal way. All these external forms that exist through time and space, and which can be perceived or measured by the five senses, have their metaphysical counterparts in the self of man. The word "Christ" did not mean originally the Saviour, or Jesus. If you look it up in the dictionary you will find that this word was originally a Greek word, *Christus*, which means the anointed one. And what is the anointed one? That is he who has been properly initiated, inspired and illumined. Figuratively he is called a king. He is not an earthly king, but a king who possesses spiritual power. That is the original meaning of the word Christ, and whoever can become a king (a Christ) by awakening his inner divinity to the consciousness of

infinite and eternal spirituality is a Christ. That is the right and rational interpretation of the word "Christ."

I am going to quote to you one or two more verses from the Old and also from the New Testament to illustrate this point. In Isaiah, the sixth verse of the ninth chapter says "For unto u a child is born, unto us a son is given: the kingdom shall be upon his shoulders; his name shall be the Prince of Peace," and so forth and so on. Of course, there we find the promise of a great deliverer, a great leader, a Messiah. This last word, again, in Hebrew, means the anointed one or the great king. In those ancient times the Hebrews also sought to interpret the teachings of their Scriptures in a crude or literal way, and they made a great mistake in choosing that method. This verse shows very clearly that the "son" or the "child" means the spirit within us. "To us a child is born" — that does not mean to our race or to our country, but to each and every one of us. To every one of us there is the son, there is the child and that child will gradually develop and become king, the Prince of Peace, God himself. That is the reason why I say that we are all hoping for the time when we shall be able to see the right meaning in these teachings.

Belief in an eternal life is as old as man himself. Every man hopes for eternal life. No one wants to die. Why? Because he is intrinsically and eternally "immortal." We find this word also in the scriptures, but, unfortunately, interpreted wrongly. Many people have believed in physical immortality and the reason for that belief is because those people were spiritually undeveloped and they could only appreciate things that could be perceived by the five senses in that particular stage of their unfolding. Naturally, they read that meaning into that particular word, "immortal."

Let us consider for a moment the various beliefs in immortality or eternal life. The ancient Egyptians believed in everlasting life, and according to them, the soul was only a double of the body. That is the reason why the Egyptians took so much care to preserve the dead. They had the notion that if by chance the body was injured or destroyed the soul would suffer a corresponding injury or destruction. Although Herodotus says that the Egyptians were the first race who had conceived an incorporeal idea of the soul, yet modern researches into Egyptology do not produce any evidence to support that theory. The ancient Chaldeans also had the notion of immortality. They were the first people who introduced the custom of burying the dead. They had a better conception of the soul than the Egyptians, and they believed in the resurrection or the resuscitation of the dead to a new life and used to bury the dead with that belief and hope. Then the ancient Jews, particularly the Pharisees, believed in re-incarnation. Philo and his followers, who lived in Alexandria, believed in this most rational theory. If time permits I shall describe that theory as briefly as possible in contrast to this other theory of resurrection. That is the reason why Jesus was considered as an incarnation of an older prophet and Jesus himself, speaking of John the Baptist, said "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." According to Jesus himself, John the Baptist was an incarnation of Elias. This passage you will find in Matthew. Then this word "Pharisee" comes from Parsee. You know the Zoroastrians are called Parsees because their home was Persia. They called the soul Phrobhasi or Prabasi, which means "stranger." Even in the Zoroastrian literature we can find traces of

belief in the incorporeal existense of the soul after its release from the body.

The Greeks have given us a very philosophical conception of the immortality of the soul and it was Pythagoras who introduced this conception of the incorporeality of the soul to the Greek people. According to some scholars he came to India and was instructed by some Buddhist and Brahman teachers. That contact opened his mind to this conception of transmigration of the soul. Before Pythagoras the teachers of Greece were known as Sophists. Sophist means one who is wise. But Pythagoras was so humble that he did not want to be called a wise man and to this word he preferred the other title, philosopher, which means a lover of knowledge.

This idea of transmigration of the soul is very different from the theory of reincarnation of the soul. According to transmigration, the law of Karma has no part to play in shaping our character or destiny. The theory of transmigration upholds that the soul after passing from this body can go to any form of life. You will remember how Pythagoras was once ridiculed by some of his friends when, on hearing a dying yell of a dog, he said in that dog he recognized the soul of an older friend. But the theory of reincarnation gives a better, a more philosophical or rational interpretation of the state of existence after death.

Christianity has, of course, its own theory of life after death. And while Christianity posits an endless future, it leaves out of the count an endless past. That is, according to the Christian scheme of Salvation, man is born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and the soul did not exist before this particular incarnation. Or, in other words,

man exists only for one term of life. And because man is a born sinner, and because he is too weak and powerless to achieve his redemption or salvation from this sin which he has inherited from Adam and Eve,—because of this powerlessness and weakness he must come to this great Saviour who sacrificed His life so that he may be redeemed and enjoy an everlasting life in Heaven after rising from the grave.

, Any sensible man or woman can find the fallacy of this doctrine. In the first place a rational mind can never accept a law which has a special application. Law must be universal; it must apply equally to all. It cannot be suspended in its operation even for one moment for any particular being, however great that being is. The edifice of Christianity stands upon two or three pillars of miracle. We are living in an age which demands explanation not in a dogmatic way, but in a rational way. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth, is one of the most pernicious doctrines that have paved the way for superstition which is so prevalent in the Christian world. It is a slur upon womanhood. But of course, this doctrine, as I have stated in the very beginning of my talk, has a deep metaphysical meaning, but no Christian expounder would believe in that interpretation of it. He accepts it in a literal form. I for one believe that Jesus was born just as we all are born. Some of the critics of Jesus—and I do not blame them for it—say that he was a bastard because this crude theory of virgin birth can be supported neither on the basis of empirical or material science, nor on the basis of higher metaphysical conception. That is, whether you look at this

theory from the standpoint of the materialist or consider it from the standpoint of the philosopher or metaphysician, you will find a great fallacy in it. As a man Jesus was great; he was good; and it is merely a waste of time to determine whether he was born in that way or not. We find another mistaken idea—that of considering the pedigree of a person, whether his ancestors, his father or great grandfather was a general or a president or a king, a philosopher or an aristocrat, instead of considering the intrinsic merits of the individual himself.

I am skeptical as to the actual existence of Jesus. Of course, I have an open mind, but so far I have not found any competent evidence to make me believe that Jesus actually lived. But assuming that he lived and was as great as people, at least his followers, think he was, why should we bother about those unessential things? As a man he was great. His greatness lies, not in that miraculous process of birth, but in the way he lived:—his practice of renunciation, his love, his prayer, his meditation. In fact, his spiritual life is enough to establish that he was a great leader.

The other doctrine, which is based upon another miracle, and which we are going to discuss this morning, is Resurrection. No sane and sensible person can accept that doctrine as infallible. Not only has it one, but many fallacies. In the first place it is superstitious. Even assuming that Jesus arose from the grave on the third day after he was killed and buried—what has that to do with us? If he was dead how could he come back to life? Death is death and life is life. If we premise that he was dead, that life was extinct in him, how could he be alive again? Please

note that is not my own conclusion but the scientific conclusion. I still reserve the right to my own belief. I do not believe that Jesus was a historical being. In the Bible it is said that he was born on the twenty-fifth of December, and they say that the shepherds were watching their flocks in the night. In that midwinter no shepherd could stay out at night to watch his flock. It is an absurdity. The nights in a desert country are much colder in midwinter than those in New York.

Christianity has been since the time of Paul a most aggressive religion. This festival of Easter—pardon me if I put it this way—was not originally a Christian festival. Christianity has adopted it indirectly from the Jewish Passover. It is a Christianized Passover. There has been not a little dispute in the first, second and third centuries as to the exact time of the celebration of that festival. The large masses of the Eastern Christians considered this festival as equivalent to the Jewish festival and they celebrated it on the fourteenth day of the moon—the full moon—which happens between the twenty-first of March and the twenty-fifth of April. The Jewish word Pascha—which means lamb—sounds like the Sanskrit Mesha—sheep. During this period the sign of the zodiac is Aries, the Ram. This has also a great astrological significance. Just as Christmas is an appropriation of an older festival, so is this festival of Easter. The Jewish Passover objectively signifies their liberation from the Egyptian captivity. But it also has a metaphysical significance. So the Christian doctrine of Redemption or Resurrection can be traced back directly to that festival. The Christian interpretation briefly is this:—you come to Jesus, the Christ, then you will

attain to an abundant and eternal life after rising from the grave.

I call this doctrine *superstitious*, because it cannot be supported by philosophy or science. I also call it *unethical*, because in the first place the custom of burial which has its origin in the belief that the dead shall arise, is most unhygienic. Those dead bodies, when they rot and are decomposed, pollute the earth, the water and the air. It must be stopped. No dead body can arise. Just examine six months after burial what happens to a dead body. Can any thoughtful man or woman believe in that? Then it is also uneconomical. Those vast areas of land that are set aside for cemeteries can better be used for raising corn and wheat. So in Christian countries we find this rank superstition. Yesterday I was amused to read the article on the first page of the *Herald-Tribune* written by ex-President Coolidge. In it he mentioned this great Christian religion and described how every individual in some degree has been modified by its influence. In that same paper there were four big headlines telling of racketeering, robbery, murder, bribery, etc. I was tempted to write Mr. Coolidge asking him if the lives of those racketeers and murderers were modified by the influence of the Christian religion. Perhaps they were. Christianity is not a failure, it has not been tried yet. Oscar Wilde once said there were many Christians before Christ but only one since Christ.

Let us consider for a moment the natural significance of Resurrection. Fundamentally it is the resurrection of nature. There we find another instance of the aggressive

spirit of Christianity. If you study the history of the world you will find that among all races a spring festival is celebrated about this time of the year (in April). We call it Vasanta Utsava in India. Easter was originally a spring festival. It is not the resurrection of the dead to life, but it is the resurrection of nature to life after winter's sleep. This word "Easter" means Goddess of Light. No scholar can prove that Jesus was buried on a Friday and arose from the grave on the following Sunday, in the early spring. You can find no records of these events in the contemporary history of any nation, not even in the history of the Romans who then ruled that part of the world, Palestine. Only Josephus has mentioned it in a casual way. According to some French authors, the teachings of Apollonius of Tyana were far nobler than the teachings that are attributed to Jesus. In fact, they believed that Jesus was a fictitious character. Assuming that Jesus was crucified on a Friday and rose from the grave the following Sunday—he could not have been completely dead. That was a case of suspended animation. Ramakrishna described that sort of death by this illustration: When the cocoanut is dry, the kernel becomes separated from the shell. If you break the shell you do not break the dry essence of the cocoanut. Jesus, according to some modern scholars, was a great Yogin. When he was nailed to the cross he passed into Samadhi or the Superconscious State. In that state he did not think of the body. And after he was buried he became more conscious of the body, and then this suspended breath produced levitation of the body and it forced open the grave. Perhaps after that he saw some of those disciples who were very much attached to

him personally. It can be interpreted another way. Sometimes we can visualize forms through intense thought. I mean the thought of devotion. It is not exactly hallucination although to some imaginative minds it may be so. Those devoted disciples thought of him so intently and intensely that they might have visualized him, not in his physical form but in some subtler form. So there was nothing of the miraculous in this phenomenon. It was quite natural. He had lived in concealment, because of the fear of further persecution, for three or four weeks and after that passed out of this life in Yoga, realizing the oneness of His Father and Himself. That is the spiritual meaning of the word ascension.

We believe that the soul is immortal in all human beings and that it is potentially divine. Somehow or other this divinity of the soul has been obscured and we have to remove the obstructions which obscure this divinity which is essential to us. It is not something which has been given us, but it is our innate, natural property and all we have to do is to lift these veils one after the other, and by that process we have to remove this ignorance. Ignorance is sin, ignorance of this great truth that we are divine. We are not born in sin and shapen in iniquity but we are still living Gods on earth and when we shall be able to remove this ignorance and realize once more our essential divinity, then and then alone shall we be resurrected to that eternal life which has been promised in all scriptures. That is spiritual resurrection.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. What is the best course for a Vedanta student to pursue in order to reach perfection, without at the same time neglecting his daily responsibilities?

A. To follow Karma Yoga, as inculcated by the Vedanta, is the best course, for a person with family duties, to attain perfection. Doing one's daily duties, and at the same time keeping the mind fixed upon God is the essence of Karma Yoga. A Karma Yogin looks upon himself as a trustee of God. He is no more than a custodian of that which God has entrusted to his care. He is not the owner of things that he temporarily possesses but a mere guardian of them. A Karma Yogin is quite unattached to the world. He lives in the world but is not of the world. He is as free from the stains and temptations of the world as a lotus leaf is from the impurities of the water upon which it floats.

Q. What is Satchidananda? And how may one attain to it?

A. Satchidananda is Brahman who is absolute existence, knowledge and bliss. "In him we live and move and have our being." We cannot express in words what Satchidananda is; for the Vedas say: "There the mind and words cannot go—we are to realize that by being and becoming one with it." This is the only thing that we cannot get by second-hand experience. We can attain to this realization by following one of the many methods shown by the great teachers of the world. The essential condition of

this is purity, sincerity and earnest desire for the truth. They alone succeed who are devoted to the truth, who seek for the truth. "The way to blessedness is along the path of truth."

Q. What causes an abnormal inclination to sleep? and how can it be corrected?

A. The inclination to sleep may be due to various causes, such as dulness, lethargy, exhaustion, over-work, etc. If it is due to over-work or physical exhaustion, then we should give rest to the system, for it is a demand of nature. But if it is due to habitual dulness or sluggishness, we must not yield to it. This is a great obstacle in the way of spiritual progress. It should be corrected by exertion, by practice. No success can be achieved without struggle and effort. How much care and attention we pay to our studies when we prepare for an examination; how much more should our ardor and application be when we aspire after spiritual success!

Q. What is the best way to make humanity believe in the power of those great souls who have lived on earth as Master? that is, in the power that they are yet working for humanity?

A. By our life and character, that is, by example and not by words. If we can live a pure and perfect life, after the example of the great souls that really lived on earth, then alone can we effectively make others believe as we do, in their power. Those souls are never absent from the earth. They are yet working from behind the screen.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

Vol. I.

AUGUST, 1931

No. 8

PRAYER

He whose presence in all things is the proof of their existence: He whose absence in all illusory things is the proof of their non-existence: He who is the cause of the Origination of the Universe: He in whom it all rests in the period of Evolution and into whom it returns at the conclusion of the Cycle: He who is All-knowing and the essence of all knowledge: He who revealed to the mind of the first poet — Brahma — the four vedas: He to whom the three gunas — Sattva, Rajas and Tamas cannot attach — they being essentially unreal: Whose true self none can comprehend — appearing as He does in manifold forms: Whose light alone can dispel all darkness of ignorance: We meditate upon that Supreme Truth!

* * *

SRI RAMAKRISHNA, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

In a narrow society there is depth and intensity of spirituality. The narrow stream is very rapid. In a liberal society, along with the breadth of vision we find a proportionate loss in depth and intensity. But the life of Sri Ramakrishna upsets all records of history. It is a remarkable phenomenon that in Sri Ramakrishna there has been an assemblage of ideas deeper than the sea and vaster than the skies.

We must interpret the Vedas in the light of the experience of Sri Ramakrishna. Sankaracharya and all other commentators made the tremendous mistake to think that the whole of the Vedas spoke the same truth. Therefore they were guilty of torturing those of the apparently conflicting Vedic texts which go against their own doctrines, into the meaning of their particular schools. As, in the olden times, it was the Lord alone, the deliverer of the message of the Gita, who largely harmonized these apparently conflicting statements, so, with a view to completely settle this dispute, immensely magnified in the process of time, He Himself has come as Sri Ramakrishna. Therefore no one can truly understand the Vedas and Vedanta, unless one studies them in the light of the utterances of Sri Ramakrishna, and surveys them through the medium of his life. It was Sri Ramakrishna who first exemplified in his life and taught that these scriptural statements which appear to the cursory view as contradictory, are meant for different grades of aspirants and are arranged in the order of evolution. The whole world will undoubtedly forget its fights and disputes and be united in a fraternal tie in religious and other matters as a consequence of these teachings.

Above all, we must always remember that all his teachings were for the good of the world. If any one has heard any injurious words from his lips, he should know that they were meant for that particular individual only; and though they might be harmful if followed by others, they were beneficial to that particular individual.

Translated from an unpublished Bengali writing of Swami Vivekananda, and reprinted from Prabuddha Bharata.

FOOD

By Swami Vivekananda

(Reprinted from the Morning Star, by courtesy of the Editor)

All our different sects of Hinduism admit the truth of the celebrated saying of the Srutis — "When the food is pure, the inner sense gets purified; on the purification of the inner sense memory (of the soul's perfection) becomes steady." Only according to Sankaracharya, the word *Ahara* means the *Indriyas* (senses), and Ramanuja takes the word to mean food. But what is the solution? All sects agree that both are necessary, and both ought to be taken into account. Without pure food, how can the *Indriyas* perform their respective functions properly? Everyone knows by experience that impure food weakens the power of receptivity of the *Indriyas*, or makes them act in opposition to his will. It is a well-known fact that indigestion distorts the vision of things, and makes one thing appear as another, and the want of food makes the eye-sight and other powers of the senses dim and weak. Similarly, it is often seen that some particular kind of food brings on some particular state of the body and the mind. This principle is at the root of those many rules which are so strictly enjoined on Hindu

society,—that we should take this sort, and avoid that sort, of food,—though in many cases forgetting heir essential substance, the kernel, we are now busy only with quarrelling about the shell and keep watch and ward over it.

Ramanujacharya asks us to avoid three sorts of defects which according to him make food impure. The first defect is that of *Jati* i. e., the very nature, or the species to which the food belongs, as onion, garlic, and so on. These have an exciting tendency and, when taken, produce restlessness of the mind, or in other words, perturb the intellect. The next is that of *Ashraya*, i. e., the nature of the person from whom the food comes. The food coming from a wicked person will make one impure and think wicked thoughts, while the food coming from a good man will elevate one's thoughts. Then the other is *Nimitta-dosha*, i. e., impurity in food due to such agents in it as dirt and dust, worms or hair; taking such food also makes the mind impure. Of these three defects, anyone can eschew the *Jati* and the *Nimitta*, but it is not easy for all to avoid the *Ashraya*. It is only to avoid this *Ashraya-dosha*, that we have so much of "Don't-touchism" amongst us now a days. "Don't touch me!" But in most cases the cart is put before the horse, and the real meaning of the principle being misunderstood, it becomes in time a queer and hideous superstition. In these cases, the *Acharas*, customs of the great *Acharyas*, the teachers of mankind, should be followed instead of *Loṅgacharas*, i. e., the customs followed by the people in general. One ought to read the lives of such great Masters as Sri Chaitanya Deva and other similarly great religious teachers, and see how they behaved themselves with their fellowmen in this respect. As regards the *Jati-dosha* in food, no other

country in the world furnishes a better field for its observation than India. The Indians, of all nations, take the purest of foods and all over the world there is no other country where the purity as regards the Jati is so well observed as in India. We had better attend the Nimitta-dosha a little more now in India, as it is becoming a source of serious evil with us. It has become too common with us to buy food from the sweets-vendor's shop in the Bazaar, and you can judge for yourselves how impure these confections are from the point of view of the Nimitta-dosha,—for, being kept exposed the dirt and dust of the roads as well as dead insects adhere to them, and how stale and polluted they must sometimes be. All this dyspepsia that you notice in every home and the prevalence of diabetes from which the towns-people suffer so much now a days, are due to the taking of impure food from the Bazaars; and that the village-people are not as a rule so subject to these complaints is principally due to the fact that they have not these Bazaars near them, where they can buy at their will such poisonous foods as Loochi, Kachoori, etc.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE — ITS REQUISITES

By the Editor

What is spiritual life? It is the life of realization of the ideal—call it God, or good, or love, or law, or truth, or principle. Every one of us has an ideal; in every moment of our life, consciously or unconsciously, we strive to realize it. Many people have the notion that the spiritual life is a life of complete abstraction. We have to charge ourselves

with the spirit. We have to be inspired. We have to attain to the state of spiritual exaltation and ecstasy, and this attainment must be accomplished in life. And how can we charge ourselves with the spirit? I will tell you a story to illustrate that.

Once Narada, the great devotee of Krishna, asked him to show him his greatest devotee. Of course Narada had in his mind the thought that perhaps the Lord would say that he himself was the greatest devotee. And in order to remove from him that sense of conceit, or vanity, the Lord, to his utter disappointment said: "In that great village (it was great because that great devotee lived there) there lives a farmer and he is my greatest devotee." When Narada heard this he wanted to verify it, and he went there. He watched this man for three days. Early in the morning after getting up, he uttered the name of the Lord three times: "Hari, Hari, Hari." Then he ate his breakfast heartily, and went into the fields. He did the same thing in the evening before retiring, taking the name of the Lord three times. And after watching him three days and three nights, Narada returned to the Lord and said to him: "Sir, how can that man be your greatest devotee when he takes your name only three times in the morning and three times in the evening? He is not devoted to you all the time. He does not practice long hours of meditation. He does not keep vigils in the night." The Lord says: "I will explain to you the mystery of it after you have done one thing for me." Narada says: "Yes, Sir, what is it?" The Lord gave him a cup filled with water and asked him to walk around the house three times with that cup, not letting one drop spill. It was

full to the very brim. When Narada returned to the Lord, he inquired: "Narada, how long did you think of me when you walked around the house with your cup of water?" Narada said: "Sir, how could I think of you! You gave me a very difficult task. I had to keep all of my mind upon this cup of water because your injunction was not to spill one drop." The Lord replied: "Narada, I have put so many responsibilities upon that man. He has his farm, his cattle, his children, and yet he finds time to think of me. And not only that; those few times he utters my name he does it with intense devotion, with firm conviction."

How often we make that mistake. We think that we can be spiritual if we can meditate for five hours or read the scriptures for ten hours or keep vigils for two hours. Of course, those performances are necessary to the initial stage of our spiritual life, but those are not the end and aim of spiritual life. The end and aim of spiritual life is the attainment of knowledge and its spontaneous expression. Of course, those people who have reached that realization do not seek this expression, but consciously or unconsciously they diffuse it. Their life is like the fire covered with ashes. There is the warmth there all the time and those who can feel it are benefitted by it.

I have told you several times — and I am going to repeat it this morning: — If you can read for two minutes, or pray and meditate for five minutes, and utter the sacred verse or word for half a minute with that intensity of feeling, with that sincere understanding, then you will have charged yourself with the spirit. You will be kindled with that fire and it will last for hours. There lies the secret of

spiritual life. That is, we must know how to light this fire and how to be charged with it. That farmer who took the name of the Lord six times, three times in the morning and three times in the evening, knew the secret of charging himself with that divine power. To him it was not a theory or belief, but it was a reality. He felt that; he lived that. That is the real spiritual life. Life must be made into that reality by an intensive thought, by meditation. And mark my words again—by meditation I do not mean long hours of sitting in a particular posture without the right thought. The thought is more important than the outer performance of the posture, or reading or praying, or uttering sacred words. How often we put the cart before the horse instead of putting the horse before the cart. That is, we do not understand the significance of spiritual practice. Once a man, to elucidate that point, how the simplest things are made most complex, made this demonstration: — He wanted to touch his nose, but instead of touching his nose with his hand directly, he first turned his hand around the back of his head and then touched his nose. It is a very simple thing if we are sincere seekers, if we are endued with genuine hunger and thirst for spiritual realization, and if we are fortunate enough to place ourselves under the guidance of a genuine Guru,—then this problem is solved. Thus the task which before this appears most difficult, is made very easy. There lies the secret of practice. We can easily eliminate all elaborate method of practice by knowing the simple and easy way of self-expression, the art and science of charging the self with divinity itself.

In India we have a most beneficial system in our spirit-

ual practice and to our spiritual life that is very essential. It is called Guru-Karana. That is, practice under a Guru who knows the truth, who has his own eyes opened, who is not a blind leader of the blind. And if we follow his instructions with that genuine Shraddha — conviction and devotion, then we make satisfactory progress along this line. And this progress is a most tangible, practical progress. In fact, the disciple feels the result of this progress. Every day he feels that his vessel is being filled with that water. There is the challenge to verify. The Guru does not bring the result directly to the student. Indeed, he cannot do that even if he wanted to. But he guides and directs the disciple. His main idea is to see that the disciple unfolds himself under his guidance. Of course this guidance is rather an auxiliary. The real help comes from the disciple's sincere devotion, his earnestness, his genuine desire to know. If there is not sincerity in this striving, then there is no result. The Guru is like a good school teacher; he gives all the necessary aid to the disciple. He does not do everything for the student, but he watches him do the exercises and corrects him. In other words, he wants him to be unfolded from within.

In India there are many people who dedicate Shiva temples. They install an emblem of Shiva, and around that emblem they build a temple. But there are other emblems of Shiva that are eternal—they are not imported and installed; and these are considered more genuine than those others. If the disciple, by following the instructions of the Guru, can reach that realization, then and then alone he knows the beauty of this life. Then it does not remain to him a theory, or an idea, but it becomes a reality. That

is, religion must be made into a reality in life. That is the spiritual practice. Without faith, without understanding, without right devotion and right disposition, we cannot reach the goal.

Many exercises are enjoined under this institution of discipleship. I cannot describe them all in one lecture, which must be given within a limited time, but the exercises that the disciple, the initiate, practices are most wonderful. All other acts are made subservient to his spiritual exercises. For instance, he gets up early in the morning and takes his ablutions, then picks some sacred leaves and flowers from the fields and gardens, and brings them to the chapel. There he lights the candles and incense, laying the flowers on the altar. Then he usually spreads a mat, *asana*, on the floor and sits upon it. These special conditions are helpful to his spiritual exercises. Sri Ramakrishna likened these conditions to the preparations the angler makes to catch fish. I do not know whether you do so in this country or not, but in India when a man wants to fish, he takes the fishing rod, line and hook and uses a kind of odorous substance which attracts the fish. There are three or four different ingredients which he mixes together and throws it into the water where the bait lies. Those ingredients are very attractive to the fish; they come, bite the bait and are easily caught that way. So all these other things, like the flowers, the incense, the light, the seat and the purity of the atmosphere of the chapel are great auxiliaries. Those things create the right atmosphere. They stimulate the disciple's devotion and meditation.

Although a man who has reached the highest stage of realization can do without these auxiliaries, still they are

necessary to the disciple, to the initiate. They are not necessary to the master. Next the disciple counts his beads. That particular exercise is called *Japa*. Then he performs his meditation, reads some passages from the scriptures, like the Upanishad, or the Gita, or the Ramayana; and then, finally, he closes his practice with salutation. It is called *Pranama*. If all these exercises are performed with the right purpose and spirit, he at once feels inspired. Although those practices, without the right thought or disposition, do not always produce the right result, still they have a wholesome influence upon the disciple. My father used to perform all these exercises very scrupulously, and once I asked him why he performed those exercises for so many hours and what benefit he derived from them. He said: "I do not know what benefit I derive, but I know this: if I can practice them regularly I feel exalted, I feel happy. But if for any reason sometimes I cannot practice them, I do not feel that sense of freedom and satisfaction." That was a very good answer.

You can not attain to the highest stage of realization by a few days' practice, but if you can feel interested in that practice, if you can enjoy sometimes, even if not every time, that sweetness, then you become more and more interested in and devoted to those exercises. Then perhaps each time you will feel that sense of ecstasy, you may feel inspired, as if you were carried away from this land into that realm of eternal rapture and joy. Of course, you will come back again. There are many people who have the fear that if they get into that state and remain there for long, who will take care of their children and other

affairs? You do not have to worry about those things, but try to reach that state of inspiration and ecstasy.

As I have already told you, our spiritual practice can be made very simple by our own understanding. The first condition is sincere desire for realization, and the next condition is the right performance of the exercises given by the Guru. Sankara has put forth four exercises for our spiritual life. That is, after we have practiced those four exercises (which are called Sadhana Chatustaya) we become fitted for the knowledge of Brahman. They are preliminaries or preparatory steps. You know the highest illumination is independent of all conditions and all exercises. But these conditions must be fulfilled before that light falls upon us. That light is falling upon everything all the time, but by these exercises we make ourselves right instruments to receive it and to reflect it. That is the all of religion. That light which comes from Brahman, in fact is its own cause. In Sanskrit it is called *Ajanya*, uncaused. That is, it is not the effect of any cause. No cause can produce that effect, but it comes in its own time. We have to hold ourselves ready to receive that light, we must make ourselves fit instruments to be inspired by it. It is like this: If a man asks you to get some fruits from a tree, which are already lying on the ground — with that particular instruction — then it may be that as soon as you reach the tree you may find some fruits already lying there, otherwise you will have to wait until the fruits fall. That is, your reaching the tree is not the cause of the falling of the fruit, but sometimes it may happen so. That is what we call coincidence. If the fruit is not al-

ready on the ground, and if it does not fall coincidently the moment you arrive there, you will have to wait one hour or two hours, or one year or an age. We have to be prepared for this and that part of our life I am now going to expound to you.

The first exercise is called *Viveka*, which means discrimination between *Nitya* or eternal, and *Anitya*, which means unreal or non-eternal. Take anything—take our health, examine it philosophically. What is the cause of health, how long can it remain? If we investigate this particular phenomenon in this rational way, we shall finally arrive at this conclusion: that health is the result of certain conditions; good food, good sleep, exercises, and so on; it does not endure for all eternity—it has its beginning and it has its end. And knowing this particular nature of health, we do not live under any false estimate about it. There are many people who think that health is the supreme end and aim of life, and they live for health only, not knowing that it must end. Although it is a good thing to observe all the laws of health,—a healthy body is a great blessing to our life,—at the same time we must not have that false notion about it. Health must be used as a good means. There is such a thing as pernicious health. Many people are healthy and strong physically, but they use their health for wrong things, for stealing, assaulting and so on. Those people who are spiritually minded, know how to make good use of health. And if we apply that method of discrimination to all other things like wealth, prosperity and success, we will come to that same conclusion—that is, they do not last long. They are all transient; they come and go.

But this method of discrimination cannot make any per-

son pessimistic. It enables him to know the truth about these things. There are many people who think that if we do not attach importance to health and wealth and success, then life becomes dull, the zest of life is destroyed, so to say, it loses all attraction for us. It does not. Life means knowledge. We must know the truth about things. That is, if all these beautiful things come to us, we must use them. We must not be discontented with them. We must not think that these things have come to delude us, or to tempt us or to lead us away from our ideals. That indicates weakness. Again, those who seek for those things are also weak. Those who think that these things are full of temptation and try to avoid them, and those also who admire and adore them, are equally wrong and ignorant. The ideal of spiritual life is that state in which we become free from all false notions. And in that state alone can we find real peace and harmony and happiness.

Then the second exercise is called *Viraga*, which means dispassion. After we have practiced the first exercise, we know how to apply the second. It becomes natural and easy. That is, after we have known the value of these things, we know what importance to attach to them. The great problem of life is nearly solved. The whole universe looks like a dramatic stage. We see this great eternal play of *Maya*—this panorama of constantly shifting scenes. Then we enjoy it. This whole universe becomes like a phantasmagoria. But we do not enjoy it, being identified with it or intensely attached to it. In the other stage we enjoy the fun of life. When we see people becoming mad for wealth and other things, we laugh within ourselves. There lies the real fun of life. We do not get caught in that play, we

keep from it, yet we see it, we enjoy it. Then, as one great teacher said, we find that the whole world is like a big lunatic asylum—all these people are insane, they are mad—that is, in their respective pursuits. They are all ill-directed, they are unbalanced, they have lost their poise and peace and, of course, their understanding. So this understanding is the result of *Viraga*.

The third exercise is called *Shatka-sampatti* (sixfold Treasure). There are six virtues in that exercise: "*Shama*" means the control of the mind; "*Dama*," control of the senses; "*Uparati*" means selfdenial. You know the disciple must abstain from many things. The fourth is "*Titiksha*," endurance. "*Shraddha*" is the fifth; it means faithful devotion to the teachings of the Guru. The last is called "*Samadhana*," concentration. They all fall under the discipline of *Tapasya*, the word which comes from the root "*tap*" meaning heat. That is, if we can practice *Tapasya*, we can feel spiritual heat within us. The life of the disciple is the life of *Sadhana* or *Tapasya*—of spiritual discipline. There is the physical *tapas*, there is the verbal *tapas*, and there is the mental *tapas*. The fourth requisite is called *Mumukshuttvam*, which means desire for liberation. If we can go from step to step, practicing these exercises under the direction of a good Guru, then this sane and wholesome desire comes to us. I call it sane and wholesome desire. There is such a thing as insane desire or unwholesome desire. To illustrate that, I shall tell you a story. Once a little ant was very hungry and from a great distance he saw a huge hill of sugar, and in that fit of hunger he thought he could eat the whole of it; but when he approached the hill and ate one grain of sugar, his hunger was gone. In many peo-

ple, if we investigate them, we can find that insane desire. I once asked my teacher to give me a formula which I could practice for five or six hours at a time. He said, first practice for ten minutes and gradually increase the time and you will be able to practice for five hours. That was the result of my insane hunger.

If we have genuine faith in the practices and attain these results by genuine Sadhana, then we know how to guide ourselves. This great problem is solved for us, and then we know how to proceed ourselves. True knowledge comes. And Vyasa says that a disciple, after he has been endowed with this four-fold discipline, becomes worthy to inquire about Brahman. Then he will have fulfilled all these conditions; then he waits with patience for that light to come. This state of waiting does not make the genuine disciple impatient. He becomes patient and firm and resolved because he possesses the right understanding. And then he remains there like the mother of pearl. The mother of pearl floats on the surface of the sea and waits for a drop that falls under certain "Yoga," combination of planets like Mars, Venus and Mercury. When that particular conjunction of the planets occurs and if it rains, then this mother of pearl which floats on the sea, takes in one drop and dives down to the bottom of the sea. She throws a sort of enamel around that drop of water which crystallizes it. It becomes hard. In that way she develops a most precious pearl.

So, this is the final result. Then all our doubts are removed and all knots of the heart are straightened out, and all Karma becomes exhausted because then, as Paul said, we live and move and have our being in that divine spirit, in the essence of existence, knowledge and bliss.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:

We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.

May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.

Vol. I

SEPTEMBER, 1931

No. 9

PRAYERS

He who is declared in the teachings of Vedanta as the one, infinite Spirit pervading the whole universe: In whom the word Ishvara, unmeaning elsewhere, is rightly lettered: Whom those desiring liberation seek within themselves with their pranas and manas, etc. properly subdued: May that unchangeable One, who is easily attainable by the Yoga of firm (doubtless) devotion, grant you all the highest good !

He who is the Creator and sustainer of the Devas: He who is the Lord of the Universe and all-wise : He who produced Hiranya-Garbha (golden egg) at the beginning (of cosmic evolution) ; may He endue us with benign wisdom !

* * *

SRI RAMAKRISHNA, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

If there is anything which Sri Ramakrishna has urged us to avoid as carefully as lust and wealth, it is the limiting of the infinitude of God by circumscribing it within narrow bounds. Whoever, therefore, will try to limit the infinite ideals of Sri Ramakrishna in that way, will go against him and be his enemy.

One of his own utterances is that those who have seen the chameleon only once, know only one colour of the animal, but those who have lived under the tree, know all the colours that it puts on. For this reason, no saying of Sri Ramakrishna can be accepted as authentic, unless it is verified by those who constantly lived with him and whom he brought up to fulfill his life's mission.

Such a unique personality, such a synthesis of the perfection of Jnana, Yoga, Bhakti and Karma, has never before appeared among mankind. The life of Sri Ramakrishna proves that the greatest breadth, the highest catholicity and the utmost intensity can exist side by side in the same individual, and that society also can be constructed like that, for society is nothing but an aggregate of individuals.

He is the true disciple and follower of Sri Ramakrishna, whose character is perfect and all-sided like his. The formation of such a perfect character is the ideal of this age, and every one should strive for that alone.

Translated from an unpublished Bengali writing of Swami Vivekananda, and reprinted from Prabuddha Bharata.

FOOD

By Swami Vivekananda

(Reprinted from the Morning Star, by courtesy of the Editor)

As in the old, so in the present day, there is a great controversy, whether it is good or bad to take animal food or live only on a vegetable diet whether we are benefited or otherwise by taking meat. Besides, the question whether it is right or wrong to kill animals, has always been a matter of great dispute. One party says that to take away life is a sin, and on no account should it be done. The other party replies, "A fig for your opinion! It is simply impossible to live without killing." The *Shastras* also differ, and rather confuse one, on this point. In one place the *Shashtra* dictates, "Kill animals in *Yajnas*," and again in another place it says, "Never take away life." The Hindus hold that it is a sin to kill animals except in *Yajnas*, but one can with impunity enjoy the pleasure of eating meat after the animal is sacrificed in a *Yajna*. Indeed there are certain rules prescribed for the householder in which he is required to kill animals on certain occasions, such as *Shraddha* and so on, and if he omits to kill animals at those times, he is condemned as a sinner. Manu says that if those that are invited to *Shraddha* and certain other ceremonies, do not partake of the animal food offered there, they take birth in an animal body in their next life. On the other hand, the *Jains*, the *Buddhists* and the *Vaisnavas* protest, saying, "We do not believe in the dictates of such *Hindu Shastras*; on no account should the taking away of life be tolerated." Asoka, the Buddhist emperor, we read, punished those who would perform *Yajnas*, or offer meat to

the invited at any ceremony. The position in which the modern *Vaisnavas* find themselves is rather one of difficulty. Instances are found in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* of the drinking of wine and the taking of meat by Rama and Krishna, whom they worship as God. Sita Devi vows meat, rice and a thousand jars of wine to the river Goddess Ganga!

In the West, the contention is whether animal food is injurious to health or not, whether it is more strengthening than vegetable diet or not, and so on. One party says, that those that take animal food suffer from all sorts of bodily complaints. The other contradicts this and says, "That is all fiction. If that were true, then the Hindus would have been the healthiest race, and the powerful nations, such as the English, the Americans, and others, whose principal food is meat, would have succumbed to all sorts of maladies and ceased to exist by this time." One says, that the flesh of the goat makes the intellect like that of the goat, the flesh of the swine like that of the swine, and fish like that of the fish. The other declares, that it can as well be argued then, that the potato makes a potato-like brain, that vegetables make a vegetable-like brain,—resembling dull and dead matter. Is it not better to have the intelligence of a living animal than to have the brain dull and inert like dead matter? One party says, that those things which are in the chemical composition of vegetable food, are also equally present in the animal. The other ridicules it and exclaims, "Why, they are in the air too. Go then and live on air only." One argues that vegetarians are very painstaking and can go through hard and long-sustaining labour. The other

says, "If that were true, then the vegetarian nations would occupy the foremost rank, which is not the case, the strongest and foremost nations being always those that take animal food." Those who advocate animal food contend, "Look at the Hindus and the Chinamen, how poor they are. They do not take meat but live somehow on the scanty diet of rice and all sorts of vegetables. Look at their miserable conditions. And the Japanese were also in the same plight, but since they have commenced taking meat, they have turned over a new leaf. In the Indian regiments there are about a lac and a half of native sepoys; see how many of them are vegetarians. The best part of them, such as the Sikhs and the Goorkhas, are never vegetarians." One party says, "Indigestion is due to animal food." The other says, "That is all stuff and nonsense. It is mostly the vegetarians that suffer from stomach complaints." Again, "It may be that vegetable food acts as an effective purgative to the system. But is that any reason that you should induce the whole world to take to it?"

VEDIC IDEAL OF HAPPINESS AND PEACE

By the Editor

The teachers of the Vedas were great lovers of peace. In the Upanishads every chapter begins with a peace prayer, and ends with a peace prayer. But what sort of peace did those great teachers idealize? I am going to base my subject upon two verses which I have selected from the Katha Upanishad. These two verses describe the conception of *Sukha* and *Shanti* — bliss and peace. "He is one without a second; the ruler of the universe, the inner self of all beings. He makes one form into many. Those sages who see him within themselves, theirs is eternal bliss. It belongs to none else, none else, none else." This the one on happiness.

So we see what a transcendental conception of happiness these great sages, I mean the teachers of the Upanishads, had. They were not in the least interested in pleasures because by the process of discrimination they found out that pleasures that can be enjoyed by the contact of the senses with their objects are transient—they come and go. Not only that, they make us afterwards miserable, sick, sorrowful, diseased, distressed. Sometimes they bring death itself. You will remember that beautiful dialogue in the same Upanishad from which I have quoted the verse — the dialogue between the great master, Yama, and the young disciple, Nachiketa. This great master, in order to test the earnestness of the young student, asked him to accept from him all the pleasures of life, like existence upon this earth for several hundred years, health, wealth, cars, horses, elephants, etc. But this young stu-

dent refused them all. Not only that, he told the master: "If these things are so precious, my Lord, you have them all; please do not tempt me with them. I do not care for them. I have not come to you for these things."

I have not seen one man or woman in the western world who could have that power of devotion and sincerity to refuse those things. If they can find a little pleasure in health or wealth, they devote themselves entirely to it. But here we find a sincere seeker after the truth, a young student who was endued with *Shraddha*, earnestness and devotion, and had the power to refuse those alluring things. All these pleasures that tempt us all the time have their opposites. That is, you cannot have a pleasure at night until two o'clock without being sick the next mornnig. You cannot have the pleasure of drinking two bottles of whiskey without expecting the after effect of it. So it requires no extraordinary wisdom to realize the values of these things. All these things pertain to this side of the phenomenal. They are never eternal and they are always preceded and succeeded by their opposites. But he knows the law who can remain superior to them. That is, when these things come, he takes them; and when these things go, he lets them go. That is the state of *Yoga*. And he who can practice that, he deserves this bliss. "That which is infinite and eternal is indeed *Sukha*---happiness. There is no happiness in the finite."

I think it will be worthwhile to discuss in this connection the opposite of *Sukha* — *Duhkha*. In fact, most of our philosophies are more or less pessimistic, but mark my words, while they are pessimistic in sensuous things, they are really optimistic in spiritual things. Take for instance *Samkhya* Philoposophy. There are six chapters in that celebrated sys-

tem of philosophy. The very first aphorism proposes the highest aim of life, but rather in a pessimistic way. That is, in that aphorism Kapila mentions the three kinds of *Duhkḥa*, misery.. His idea is to present to the reader the meaning of *Duhkḥa*. What is it? What is its origin? What is its extent? What is its end?

We must not remain in delusion. There are some optimistic systems of teaching which willfully ignore this side of life — life of poverty, sorrow, sickness and death. But if we want to reach a satisfactory solution of this great problem of *Duhkḥa*,—or let us call it the problem of this world, because in this world, if you are a sincere man or woman, you will find more misery than joy — we will have to face it courageously and determine its real cause, its limit and extent. There is so much unemployment, for instance. Then there is so much sickness, so much distress in societies and communities; so many people die. To consider these seems to be the right and natural thing. I think no compassionate man or woman can willfully shut his or her eyes upon these things which are so vigorously real to the senses. That is, in our search after happiness, we must begin with the consideration of these stern realities. If we can solve the mystery of this problem of *Duhkḥa*,—misery then we shall have attained to the right understanding of *Sukḥa* -- happiness.

Kapila mentions this problem of *Duhkḥa* in the very first aphorism of his psychology. "The complete cessation of the three kinds of *Duhkḥa*, pain, is the highest *summum bonum* of life." We all try to avoid pain. That is our natural tendency. But how can we effectually and permanently accomplish this end? Then, what are these three kinds of

Duhkha? Here we find the subtlety of reasoning. Here we find no attempt to escape from the inevitability of facts, because that is an impossibility. The first kind of misery is called *Adhyatmika*. Let us call it physical, like rheumatism, fever, cold, and so forth and so on.

Then *Adhibautika*, that is that kind of pain which is caused by a thief or an animal or a fire. And then *Adhidaivika* which means that kind of pain which happens accidentally. For instance, you were driving in a car and your car skidded and went down the hill and you were injured. That sort of misery falls under the last category.

Then he does not stop there. He further elaborates that idea of *Duhkha*. In the next aphorism he discusses that by all known means and methods no one has been able yet to end all misery, to remove the cause of misery. We have to go to the cause of it. That is, we have to dissect it, analyze it and reach the very origin, so that we may know how to remove it. There are so many methods of healing—Christian Science, New Thought, etc. But all those methods that man has been able to discover have proven a failure. Why? Because sickness still remains. They can produce temporary relief, but there is the relapse. Take for instance, this gentleman sitting here in front of me. He may have had a cold five years ago, and he might have called a doctor who cured it, but he may have another attack since. The cold remains; it is there still. That is, in the whole universe there is the cause of cold all the time. No one is ever able to remove the cause. It may be that this gentleman has been immunized from colds for all his life, but it remains for others; others get it and suffer from it.

When we are hungry we eat something and the hunger

is removed, but in five or six hours it returns. That sort of cure is not enough, because the disease relapses. So all these methods that we have so far known or discovered all are impermanent and inefficacious. They do not remove the cause of misery. The term "*Duḥkḥa*" has a wide connotation—by it Kapila means all those things that make man unhappy, that take from him his ease, his comfort, his joy.

Then finally, I think that is the sixth aphorism, he comes to the conclusion: that the final liberation from these three kinds of pain by knowledge is the *summum bonum* of life. We have to know the meaning of things and if we can do that, then can we remain unaffected by them. I will give you an illustration of it. A mother has two children and one of them in the evening wears the mask of a lion and comes to his younger brother, a child of three or four years; and this baby, when he sees him in the lion's mask, is frightened. He thinks that is a terrible creature, but the mother comes and says "That is not a lion but your brother John. He is frightening you in that mask." And then his fear disappears. If we can know the cause, the reason for a thing's or a person's being whatever that thing or that person is, not by mere hearsay, but by direct comprehension, then all fear and delusion end. So naturally Kapila has assigned the highest place to knowledge. Try to know. Do not try to turn away from unpleasant things. Meet them courageously, know their meaning and remain unaffected by them. When Swami Vivekananda lived in Benares as a mendicant monk, he was followed one day by some monkeys, on his way back from "*Madhukari*." The Sannyasins go to different houses for their bread. They do not go to one house because if they did, that would be a tax upon the householder. They

go to one house and perhaps take one slice of bread, and then to another, and when they have collected enough food they do not go to other houses: Just as the bee takes the honey from various flowers, a little from each. So this system is called *Madhukari*, the method of the bee. In Benares there are many monkeys. They live on large trees. They are very mischievous animals and sometimes they follow these Sannyasins when they find them carrying their *Madhukari* in a bag of cloth. If the Sannyasins run away when they are followed by one or two monkeys — the whole group follows them and in that way the situation is made worse. Swami Vivekananda faced them and they all turned away. We have to face our problems. And if you turn your back upon them as a coward, without trying to solve them, then they will follow you, torment you and finally kill you. So as wise men and women we must know the reason for the existence of these things such as disease, distress and death. Try to know the cause of misery. If you can do that then you are free from it.

This cessation of misery, let me tell you again, is not the physical or phenomenal cessation. Please do not have that delusion. There are many people in the world who think, if they can know the secret of health, they shall never become sick. That is weakness; that is selfishness. But whether sickness comes or health comes, I will not be disturbed either by the one or the other. That is the idea of freedom from misery.

There are many people who think that if they are healthy, if they achieve success, if people honor and praise them, they will be happy. Those people whose conception of happiness is that, are sure to meet with its opposite. When

the opposite comes, and it must come, they give way to it. We do not mean we must be cynical or stoical to health or wealth or success. Not that. But we must find our firmness, cheerfulness, and strength in knowledge. Then we can treat all pairs of opposites alike. If fortune comes we will take it and make good use of it. But if misfortune comes we must take that too, that is with equal cheerfulness and calmness. That is real religion. Pardon me if I say that religion is not in heaven or any locality, but it is right here in that power, and in the joy and peace which are the results of that power. That is the religion of Yoga. We do not believe in peace in a post-mortem heaven, but right here religion must be realized. The bliss of it must permeate us; the peace of it must exalt us. That is our conception of religion.

Mankind have sought for peace from the very dawn of civilization because there is the instinctive desire in man to be peaceful. And he has tried various methods to realize that desire. Man naturally is a peaceable being. Man loves peace. Even the war that man makes has peace for its objective. "War for peace!"

Then, of course, sometimes instead of putting the horse before the cart we put the cart before the horse. Sometimes people become so fanatical that they think if they can start war, they can establish peace. In this last war—when your country entered the war—they said: "We are going to wage this war for peace." But the inconsistency and the absurdity of that purpose I have no time to discuss now. You will hear of it some other time.

We Hindus in general, as these great teachers of the Upanishads, are great lovers of peace. They had a trans-

cidental conception of peace. It is not that they ignored this side of life, as many people have the notion that Vedanta teaches that this phenomenal life is an illusion. Vedanta does not mean that it is an absolute or utter illusion. When you consider all these things that happen in succession, you must admit they have no eternal existence; in that sense life is an illusion. For instance, we had our great grandparents, grandparents and parents. They are not living now, they are all gone. As a stream life is eternal, but individuals are not eternal. Even this great cycle, the period of Cosmic Evolution, is not eternal. That is, these cycles—world periods—come and go, just as these various generations come and go. Once the great empire of Rome existed, but it is now all vanished. In ancient times there were two great kingdoms in India. One was founded by King Yadu and the other by King Raghu. Where are they now? How many have come since? They are all gone. Why should we not know the truth about these things. The world is not an utter illusion, but nothing is permanent or real here. Everything is fast vanishing, like those kingdoms of yore. This is an aggregate of shifting scenes only. There is a basic permanent reality behind them all. That is the truth.

Now these great masters, although they had that highest conception of the ideal and also its realization, did not ignore this phenomenal side of existence. In fact, their thoughts were directed towards the miserable people who are attached to this life, to raise them from this whirlpool of Samsara—the "slough of despond."

This conception of peace we find in the same Upanishad. In fact, this verse on peace that I am going to read you now follows the other verse that I have already read. "That is

the reality of the real. That is the life of living. That is the one in the many. That indeed grants us the fulfillment of our desires. Those who know that as such within themselves to them belongs eternal peace. To none else; to none else; to none else."

If we are sincere seekers after peace, we have to know the reality of the real. That is the eternal background of these things. We have to know the screen upon which these pictures are thrown;—you, I and all of us, are pictures or appearances. You have to know the permanent background, the principle behind them. "That is the life of the living." What is our common property? Life or existence. We have the same life in us all. Then, "that is the unity in variety." That is, the many are made into a magnificent whole strung upon that one thread. You have to know this truth within yourself, by your direct experience. If you can do that, then you will realize peace and not until then. So we see the difference between this conception of peace and the conception of peace by the diplomats. I do not mean they are not interested in the happiness and well-being of their fellow men. Perhaps each one is more or less selfish. The French man, for instance, cares for nothing but France, and an American knows nothing but the United States. An American favoring peace, wants to safeguard the interests of his country and ignores the other part of the world. Can peace be established upon that narrow conception of life? That peace leads to war in the long run. So long as such terrible foes as lust, hatred, greed, anger, pride and jealousy rule us, we cannot know the real meaning of peace. So long as the least vestige of those instincts remains in us we can form no idea of real peace. But if we

can eliminate even that by being truly spiritual, then we shall be worthy of that peace.

So we see what a different outlook is opened to us for peace. Sometimes we are told the sword should be beaten into the plough-share and the spear into the pruning hook, but what is the actual condition? Instead of the sword beaten into the plough-share we have now these horrible instruments of war, and who knows what more dreadful instruments will be invented later for the next war. What an irony it is! Peace between two or more savage, militaristic nations and by a covenant or a contract! But the time will come when this selfishness will mature and those covenants will be treated like scraps of paper. They will scatter them to the winds. They have done that, they are doing that and they shall do that because they do not know the significance of peace. This Vedic conception of peace must be taught to mankind. All these so-called leaders of nations must be made moral and spiritual first and then the peoples. If there is any peace it will come after Gandhi's example because he is a moral man, a sincere man, a man who loves and worships truth, a man who has no shrewdness, no fear, no selfishness in him. And if his scheme succeeds that will be a blessing to all humanity, not only to India or England, but to the whole human race. They are already ashamed of their militaristic schemes, of their army and navy and they will be put to still greater shame later if they do not change their tactics. Men and women must be truly and really spiritual. That is, by practice of Yoga, by practice of religion, by knowledge, by seeing the truth with their inner eyes and by enjoying in life the sweetness of peace and bliss.

I will just read in closing, two verses from the Gita which

also describe the nature of this peace; "He obtains peace into whom all desires enter in the manner in which the waters enter into the ocean which is ever being filled and is yet of unshakable steadfastness, but not he who hankers after objects of desire."

Thousands upon thousands of rivers flow into the ocean. The ocean is their goal. And of course, they carry their voluminous contents with them, but they cannot cause any rise in the fullness of the waters of the ocean. That is, the ocean is always full, steadfast and calm, whether those rivers flow into the ocean or not. It never overflows its banks. Even so, that man who can take all those things that come unto him or go out of him with a philosophic indifference, unconcern, calmness, poise and strength — he deserves peace. Please note this: He deserves peace. I am rather skeptical about this world-peace, but I believe if all humankind, men and women and children also, at the same time can develop this conception of peace and realize it, although this is a mere phantom of hope, perhaps then there can be peace on earth. If we can be unfolded into that consciousness of peace then there shall be no more war; selfishness will have been removed, and selfishness is the cause of war.

When this illumination comes, all selfishness ceases to exist and then we know what peace is, but before that there shall be no peace. "That man who having abandoned all desires, lives without attachment, without selfishness, without vanity, without conceit, he attains peace."

So if you are sincere seekers for that attainment, then I will urge you to follow that ideal of Peace and realize it in life. Then there shall be no more talk or thought or act of war. There will be only Peace, eternal Peace and abundant Peace.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:

We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Devas who is their Creator.

May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

Vol. I

OCTOBER, 1931

No. 10

PRAYERS

He, who is Eternal; whom whole mankind worship; by whom the universe is pervaded; for whom the good perform work; of whom the world is born and in whom it rests; whose power and greatness are incomprehensible; I meditate upon that Narayana who is far and near and everywhere!

Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver), Rudra (the Destroyer), Agni (the Consumer), Ravi (the Sun), Chandra (the Moon), Indra (the Thunderer), Marut (the Wind), Yajna (the Sacrifice) and so on—the sages describe the One Eternal Ens, as they conceive it through the multifarious forms of the intellect. All my adoration to the Divine Essence—the destroyer of that ignorance whose form is this world.

* * *

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

On the Religion suited to the present age.

For this iron age (Kali-Yuga) it is communion with God by love, devotion and self-surrender, as practised by the Rishi (Sage) Narada, that is most suitable. For the other Yugas (ages) many hard penances and devotional practices had been prescribed; it is very difficult to perform them with success in this Yuga: the term of human life is so short now, not to speak of the malarial fever which undermines the constitution. How could one go through hard devotional exercises?

In whatever way one may fall into the trough of nectar, one becomes immortal. If one falls into the trough after many devotions one becomes immortal, likewise he who is pushed into it. Consciously or unconsciously or even mistakenly—in whatever way you utter the name of the Lord—you will acquire the merit of such utterance.

Chant forth the name of Hari (God) morning and evening, keeping time all the while by clapping your hands; all your sins and afflictions will then leave you. If you clap your hands standing under a tree, the birds sitting on it will fly away; so if you chant forth the name of Hari clapping your hands at the same time, the birds of evil thoughts will fly away from the tree of your body.

* * *

FOODBy **Swami Vivekananda**

(Reprinted from the Morning Star, by courtesy of the Editor)

Whatever one or the other may say, the real fact, however, is that the nations who take animal food are always, as a rule, notably brave, heroic and thoughtful. The nations who take animal food also assert, that in those days when the smoke from *Yajnas* used to rise in the Indian sky, and the Hindus used to take the meat of animals sacrificed, then only great religious geniuses and intellectual giants were born among them; but since the drifting of the Hindus into the Babajis' vegetarianism, not one great original man arose from amidst them. Taking this view into account, the meat-eaters in our country are afraid to give up their habitual diet. The Arya Samajists are divided amongst themselves on this point, and a controversy is raging within their fold—one party holding that animal food is absolutely necessary, and the opposite party denouncing it as extremely wrong and unjust.

In this way, discussions of a conflicting character, giving rise to mutual abuses, quarrels and fights, are going on. After carefully scrutinising all sides of the question, and setting aside all fanaticism that is rampant on this delicate question of food, I must say that my conviction tends to confirm this view,—that the Hindus are, after all right,—I mean that injunction of the Hindu Shastras, which lays down the rule that food, like many other things, must be different according to the difference of birth and profession; this is the sound conclusion. But the Hindus



of the present day will neither follow their Shastras, nor listen to what their great Acharyas taught.

To eat meat is surely barbarous and vegetable food is certainly purer,—who can deny that? For him surely is a strict vegetarian diet, whose one end is to lead solely a spiritual life. But he who has to steer the boat of his life with strenuous labor through the constant life-and-death struggles and the competition of this world, must of necessity take meat. So long as there will be in human society such a thing as triumph of the strong over the weak, animal food is required, or some other suitable substitute for it has to be discovered; otherwise the weak will naturally be crushed under the feet of the strong. It will not do to quote solitary instances of the good effect of vegetable food on some particular person or persons;—compare one nation with another and draw conclusions.

The vegetarians again, are also divided amongst themselves. Some say that rice, potatoes, wheat, barley, maize and other starchy foods are of no use; these have been produced by man, and are source of all maladies. Starchy food which generates sugar in the system is most injurious to health. Even horses and cows become sickly and diseased, if kept within doors and fed on wheat and rice; but they get well again if allowed to graze freely on the tender and growing herbage in the meadows. There is very little starchy substance in grass and other green edible herbs. The orang-outang eats grass and nuts, and does not unusually eat potatoes and wheat, but if he ever does so, he eats them before they are ripe,—i.e., when there is not much starch in them. Others say that taking roast meat,

plenty of fruit and milk is best suited to the attainment of longevity. More especially, they who take much fruit regularly do not so soon lose their youth, as the acid of fruit dissolves the foul crust formed on the bones which is mainly the cause of bringing on old age.

All these contentions have no end; they are going on unceasingly. Now, the judicious view admitted by all in regard to this vexed question is, to take such food as is substantial and nutritious, and at the same time, easily digested. The food should be such as contains the greatest nutriment in the smallest compass, and be at the same time quickly assimilable, otherwise, it has necessarily to be taken in large quantity, and consequently the whole day is required only to digest it. If all the energy is spent only in digesting food, what will there be left to do other works?

Milk is very difficult of digestion, especially when one is suffering from acidity, and cases have happened when even by gulping down a glass of milk in haste, life has been jeopardised. Milk should be taken as a child does from its mother's breast. If it is sucked or sipped by degrees it is easily digestible, otherwise not. Being itself hard of digestion, it becomes the more so when taken with flesh; so the Jews are prohibited from taking flesh and milk at the same meal.

The foolish and ignorant mother who forces her baby to swallow too much milk, beats her breast in despair within a few months, on seeing that there is little hope of her darling's life! The modern medical authorities prescribe only a pint of milk even for an adult and that is to

be taken as slowly as possible; and for babies a feeding bottle is the best means. Our mothers are too busy with house-hold duties, so the maid-servant puts the crying baby in her lap, and not unfrequently holds it down with her knee, and by means of a spoon makes it gulp down as much milk as she can! And the result is that generally it is afflicted with liver complaints and seldom grows up,—that milk proves to be its doom; only those that have sufficient vitality to survive this sort of dangerous feeding attain a strong and healthy manhood.

* * *

SERMON SENTENCES

Man is not the mere person with three score and ten years of earthly existence, but he is an eternal being.

Life is not the few years of existence upon earth, limited by birth at one end and death at the other.

Life is never understood if considered only on the theory of one incarnation.

The eternity of the Soul presupposes its existence before birth and after death. If the Soul did not exist before birth its existence after death will be as absurd as an infinite stick with one end.

The right place to seek for the reason of a person's being what he is now, is in what he was before.

The same Soul dwells in all beings. The difference between one and another is in the degree of their evolution and not in kind.

The lowest form of life and the highly evolved one represent two extreme links in the infinite chain of Evolution.

What is not already in a thing can never come out of it.

RENUNCIATION

By the Editor.

Among the most puzzling problems that philosophy has to deal with is the question of Renunciation. Some people understand by renunciation total indifference to all the interests of life, while others think avoidance of work and adoption of a retired life is all that renunciation means. But true renunciation is neither indifference to the world, nor avoidance of work. It is not apathy, nor inactivity, nor giving up of duties and responsibilities. Renunciation is control of desires—concentration of energy. It is devotion to duties, or the consecration of self to the realization of a higher ideal in life. It is vigor. "The doing of duties without hope of gain or fear of loss is renunciation" says Sri Krishna in the Gita. "He is the real Yogin, he is the real worker, who sees non-action in action and action in non-action."

If we closely examine the heart of every individual, we shall find there a constant desire for freedom from miseries or acquirement of happiness. The saint meditates, the robber robs, under the promptings of this desire. Every one of us is struggling every moment of our life for this freedom, rightly or wrongly. But the question is yet undecided, What is freedom? What is happiness? And how to attain it? Is it to be found in indulgence or abstinence? There are countries on the surface of the earth where the people enjoy all sorts of social and political liberties; where command of worldly resources makes them masters of everything that wealth can purchase or power can possess. In

a word there are nations the very imitation of whose life—the enjoyment of the blessings they possess—is the highest ambition to many others. But go to those countries, live among those nations and ask them, "Are you happy, people? Are you free?" and observe the answer they return. Not one in a thousand of those who are sincere will tell you that he is. With all their pomp and power, with all their civilization, refined habits and manners, it is all void, all empty within. True freedom is not in the possession of wealth, nor in the search after pleasure and enjoyment, but in the control of desires. It is weakness and slavishness to depend upon the outside world for happiness. It is a vain search, a search of a thirsty man for water in a mirage. The ultimate result is disappointment, distress and death. These social liberties and political privileges cannot give you that freedom. It lies in your heart, in your power of control, in your knowledge of things, in your mastery of self. Which is the stronger man, he whom the objects of the world cannot disturb or he who runs after this thing and that and is never satisfied? Which is the more free, Alexander the Great or the Indian gymnosophist? Which is the more happy, the conquering prince or the ascetic?

When Alexander visited India he met a Sannyasin in the Indian forests. He was very deeply impressed with the latter's renunciation and austere habits and asked him to come with him to Macedon. The Sannyasin refused. Alexander requested him again, and again he refused. He requested him a third time with offers of gold and a palace.

But the Sannyasin who had attained the highest wisdom, persistently refused. Alexander then got enraged and drawing his sword said, "Look here, man, if you again refuse I will kill you immediately!" Upon this the sage replied with a smile, "What nonsense you talk, O Emperor! You could never imagine anything more foolish and impossible than that. You can never kill me; I have conquered death. I am immortal."

Once upon a time a prince with a large army was going out on a conquering expedition. An ascetic from his cave happened to see the march of the army and the prince in gorgeous dress on an elephant. He inquired of his pupils about the matter. The pupils said, the prince of the country was going out to conquer the neighboring tribes. "To conquer, to rob; well, can anyone of you manage to send him this small penny?" One of the disciples took him at his word, ran to the prince and gave him the penny. "What do you mean by this?" asked the prince, "I am the master of all these vast territories, what do you mean by giving me this small coin?" The disciple said, "You Majesty, this is my Master's behest—I do not know why." "Well, who is your master? Where is he?" "Yonder, in the cave, Sir," replied the disciple. "I will go to him and ask him the reason." When the prince reached the cave, the sage said from within, "Prince, you have so much wealth already, and yet you are greedy for more. I thought you to be very poor and sent my small charity to you."

. This is the world—a field of eternal search after wealth and enjoyment. No rest, no peace, no happiness. Huge hopes are rising this moment, and deep depressions follow-

ing in the next. No one knows whence all these come and whither they go. An endless, boundless ocean of desires. He is the happy man who is not disturbed by the troubles and turmoils of the world, who is firmly fixed in his principles and wants neither pleasures nor pains, neither joy nor sorrow, neither prosperity nor adversity; who fears none nor is feared; who injures none, nor is injured. This state of balance, this state of calmness, this state of control is ideal manhood. This is knowledge, this is strength, this is renunciation. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "Greed of the flesh and greed of gold is the cause of all bondage." He who can give up this greed is the free man.

Our aim of life is freedom, and that freedom comes through non-attachment. If we flee from the active world and try to be unattached by our mere severance from it, we cannot become unattached at all. The world will follow us wherever we go. This mind this body, will create a new world around us. Our end is liberation, neither enjoyment nor sorrow, neither optimism nor pessimism. We must see how far we have advanced towards the goal. We want neither luxury nor austerity; our struggle is for strength, for freedom. Whatever stands in the way we will throw up outright, no matter what it is. Strength does not consist in avoiding danger, but in facing it and overcoming it. The more we advance towards the East, the farther we are from the West.

By reunciation is not meant giving up physical attachment alone, but giving up desires, the deep-rooted cravings of the heart. Nor does it mean rash and reckless sacrifice

of life under the spur of an impulse. It is not a matter of sentiment. The soldier gives up his life in the field of battle, not with any thought or deliberation on the seriousness of life, but purely under a craze or impulse. That is not a noble instance of self-sacrifice. He is a slave to his passion. He does not know how to live a better and nobler life. He is ignorant of the fact that there is greater wisdom in living than in dying. He is entirely under the control of nature. His sacrifice of life is like the sacrifice of a dog for his master's property, or even worse. The dog cannot but do so; that is his nature. The highest renunciation is that which is done with knowledge, with discrimination; which is done as a master and not as a slave. The essence of renunciation is self-sacrifice; but sacrifice of self with knowledge, with deliberation. There are many people who seek danger and disaster as an opportunity to display their valor and bravery. They are not practising renunciation though they are ready to lay down their lives. Their sacrifice is due to their audacity, their ignorance. Any fool can kill others and eventually be killed under an emotion or uncontrollable passion.

Again there is a class of people who say non-resistance of evils is the greatest virtue. No one can deny that it is so. But who can practice this virtue? He, who, having the power to resist the evil, does not resist for a higher motive, is the man who can practice it. If you have the power to kill your enemy, and yet do not do it from love, then it is forgiveness. If, having much to enjoy and the power to rule, you give up the world to follow a higher ideal for the service of God and man, then it is real renun-

ciation. The coward does not injure, the beggar wears a soiled shirt, but that is not renunciation. First have the power of self-assertion and then lay claim to the merit of self-denial. The blind do not see, the deaf do not hear, the wall does not speak; that is not renunciation. Give up, having the capacity and power to enjoy, that is renunciation. Rama, Krishna, and Buddha are the glorious instances of such renunciation. Each was a prince, each one was a great hero; but each renounced at the call of a higher duty, a higher responsibility. They did not shake off duties because it is painful to do duties. They did not choose a smooth, safe path from a difficult and dangerous one.

The vitality of renunciation lies in the conviction of truth, in the sincerity of purpose, in the strong will to do or die in the realization of a higher ideal. Three things are necessary to achieve a great work; first, feeling, i.e. sincere conviction and realization of the necessity of the end in view,—a clear conception of the ideal; secondly, a strong determination, an adamant will that quakes not before mountain-high difficulties, a resolution either to advance or to fall, and never to return till the goal is reached; thirdly, a thorough knowledge of the plan of action; i.e. how to proceed with success, how to win the battle. "To know is to act. Knowledge is useless unless expressed in action." A combination of feeling, firmness and action, or, in other words, practicality is the secret of success. Whatever be our sphere of work, whatever be our creed and scope in life, whether we are Karmins, or Yogins, or Jnanins, or Bhaktas, whether we are preachers, or professors, or patriots, we must give up all selfish desires and

tear off the veil of attachment that shrouds our vision, and devote ourselves heart and soul to the achievement of the object, to the realization of the ideal. We must not look back, but always look forward; and never to speculate on the future. We will "act in the living present, heart with-in and God overhead." "Verily to the work you have a right, and never to the fruits thereof" says the Gita.

Sri Krishna, the mighty teacher of strength, took Arjuna to task when he found in him that unsteadiness, that lethargy, that weakness which is unworthy of a hero of his stamp, and preached to him in a thundering voice in the field of Kurukshetra the sublime precepts of renunciation that still echo in our ears through the dim and distant past and inspire us with the hope that we will also be able one day to shake off our lethargy and unmanliness, our cowardice and weakness, and come out like brave ones in the field of practicality with the settled determination "to do or die." To understand the essence of the Bhagavad Gita, the truth, the knowledge that underlies every word of it, we must learn the virtue of renunciation. The untold treasure of the Gita is open to them alone who are pure and sincere, who are brave and active, who are ready and willing to do their duties at all costs. This sacred devotion to duty, devotion to the service of God and humanity, regardless of consequences, is the theme of the Bhagavad Gita. Doing duty for duty's sake, working for work's sake, not caring whether we gain or lose, whether we live or die, is the main teaching of the Gita. It is not the form of the duty or work that makes it good or bad, great or low, but it is the spirit in which it is done that makes it so. Every duty, every work is great and good. The

butcher's duty is as sacred and great to him as the priest's. The shoemaker who is honest and turns out the best pair of boots, is a much better worker than the teacher or professor who talks nonsense.

So far we have seen that the essence of renunciation is sacrifice of desires, sacrifice of selfishness. Renunciation never means keeping back or fleeing from the field of action, never the shirking of duties and responsibilities. Every man has something to do in the world. The king on the throne has his own duties to do, the Sannyasin in the forest has his own duty also. Each one's duty is great in its own place. But each one must be unattached to the world; that is the *sine qua non* of work. Sri Ramakrishna said, "the snake charmer must first learn the art well and then try to play with the snake. If without first knowing the art anyone wants to catch or play with the snake, he is sure to be bitten and killed." The soldier must undergo a strict discipline for years before he goes to the field of battle. So before we engage ourselves in work or active duties in life, we must learn how to work unharmed and with success. Some years of patient practice and study are necessary to make ourselves fit for work. The world is full of temptations, full of opposing influences, and unless we know how to resist them, how to be unattached to them, we are sure to succumb, sure to fail. Strength, strength is the only thing needed; strength to resist, strength to struggle, strength to do and strength to renounce. Whether we are Sannyasins or house-holders, whether we are Brahmins or Kshatriyas, whether we are princes or peasants, we must do our allotted duties in life; and there lies our salvation. The great sage Vyasa sent his son Suka to king

Janaka to learn renunciation from him. Suka, who was a born Brahmacharin (without any stain of worldliness) at first refused to go to Janaka (a house-holder) to learn renunciation; but his father asking him again, he consented and went to the king. On entering the great hall Suka found Janaka seated on a high golden throne, with ministers and servants all around, deeply engaged in state deliberations. The king, busy with duty, took no notice of him, and Suka thought in his mind "Is this the man to whom my father has sent me to learn renunciation? What can he teach me of renunciation, himself immersed in the world and luxuries. However, I will approach him and do my father's bidding." As he came near, the king stood up, and received him with due respect, seated him on a high seat and entered into conversation with him. In the meantime a great hue and cry arose in the palace, the whole palace being on fire. Janaka took no heed of it and went on with the conversation. Suka, all of a sudden broke away, and asked the king's leave to go out to take care of his loin cloth that was drying outside. Here Janaka stopped him and said: "O Brahmin, my whole palace is being burned into ashes and I am not agitated, and you, who are a Brahmacharin, are anxious for the safety of your loin cloth." The whole truth was revealed at once. Janaka knew how to work, how to live in the world and yet not be of the world; how to be unattached, how to renounce.

So it is not necessary that we must give up all outer connections with our wealth and friends and relatives. We may be in the midst of them all and yet be unattached, "like the lotus leaf which is in the water but is not wet by it." We should consider ourselves as stewards of our

wealth and all that temporarily belongs to us; not masters, or owners, and then we shall not grieve, even if we happen to lose them. The cause of attachment is desire; if we can kill that desire, we are free. Even if we retire into the forest or live in a cave and still have desires, we are bound. That is why Sri Krishna says "That man is a hypocrite who does not work physically, but retains in his mind all the desires of enjoyment."

Therefore true renunciation is not indifference, nor is it avoidance of work, nor passivity, nor non-resistance or reckless sacrifice of life; it is non-attachment, it is sacrifice of self in a higher cause. "The strong and not the weak are fit for renunciation" says the Sruti. "The strong in body, strong in mind, and strong in spirit deserve immortality." We must be strong and energetic, brave and fearless, pure and unattached. Freedom is our end; devotion is the means. Heedless alike of the praise or blame of the world, we will work till the end is attained. Those really live who live for others. It is the giver who is blessed and not the beggar. "Give up everything for the good of humanity" says Buddha. Surely it is renunciation of all desires that is the greatest good, the highest bliss, the supremest freedom.

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The season's work of the Vedanta Society will be resumed commencing with Sunday, October 4th. There will be services each Sunday, at 11 A. M.

All are cordially invited to attend them. — Editor.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:

We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.

May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.

Vol. I

NOVEMBER, 1931

No. 11

P R A Y E R S

I know what is virtue, but I have no craving for it. I also know what is vice, but I cannot dissuade my mind from it. I do, O Lord Hrishikesha (Krishna), as Thou, who dwellest in my heart, inclinest me to do!

That deathless desire with which the unwise cling to objects (of the senses), desiring Thee, may I have that eternal and unchangeable Love for Thee and Thee alone!

I do not pray Thee for wealth or men or the gift of composing beautiful verses, but grant me this, O Lord, that I may have pure and absolute Bhakti (devotion) for Thee in incarnation after incarnation!

* * * * *

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

on

Obstacles to Devotional Exercises

If there is a small hole in the bottom of a jar of water, the whole water flows out by and by; similarly if there be the slightest tinge of worldliness in the aspirant, all his exertions come to naught.

Soft clay admits of forms, but the burnt clay does not. So those whose hearts are burnt with the fire of worldly desires cannot be impressed with spiritual ideas.

Sugar and sand may be mixed together, but the ant rejects the sand and eats the sugar. Similarly pious men and Paramahansas (great yogins) reject the unreal (i.e. lust and gold) and choose the real (i.e. Sachchidananda).

When going through spiritual exercises (Sadhana) do not associate with those who never concern themselves with matters spiritual. Such people scoff at those who worship God and meditate upon Him and they ridicule piety and the pious. Keep yourself far aloof from them.

Let there be harmony between your thought and speech; that is the right form of spiritual exercise. Otherwise, if you say, "O Lord! Thou art my All in All," while you are thoroughly convinced that the world is your all in all, all your devotional exercises are bound to be fruitless.

Let no one practise devotional exercises (Sadhana) having any ulterior object (e. g. wealth, worldly honors, etc.) in view. He who seeks the Lord alone, has his desire fulfilled.

SAYINGS
of
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Work is worship.

Where should you go to seek for God—are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak, Gods?

May I be born again and again and suffer a thousand miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls; and above all my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races and of all species, is the special object of my worship.

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest the divinity within, by controlling nature external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one or more or all of these and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, dogmas, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details.

I do not believe in a religion or God which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.

Let us ourselves be Gods and help others to be Gods.
BE and MAKE.

I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. If we want to regenerate India we must work for them.

As long as "TOUCH-ME NOT-ISM" is your creed and kitchen pot your deity, you cannot rise spiritually.

Strength, strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page. Strength, oh man, strength, say the Upanishads; stand up and be strong.

Arise! Awake and stop not till the Goal is reached.

SYNTHESIS OF HINDUISM

By the Editor

Hinduism is a very old religion. Scholars have failed to assign any date to its beginning. The Vedas are the source of this religion, or it may be said to have existed since the first Vedic inspiration. By Hinduism we must not understand a religion that shows the way to liberation alone, but it is the science of the origin, growth, and maturity of all the relations between man and God, between soul and soul. It does not consist in dogmas and doctrines, but teaches us how to realize the fundamental harmony that underlies all phenomena. In this sense it is eternal. So long as there has been creation, there has been this religion also. It is the very backbone of the universe.

According to the Hindus, the Vedas are not the work of man. They are the accumulated treasury of the knowledge that has been revealed to the saints and sages of all countries and all times. The Hindus do not accept anything merely on personal authority, but on principle. They know that truth is eternal and unchangeable, and from whatever source it comes it is acceptable to them. They have solved the problem of existence and discovered the grand unity that is the background of all variety. They hate no religion, criticise no creed, but harmonize all the methods of self-knowledge or God-consciousness from the standpoint of basic and ultimate unity.

The Vedas declare, "That which exists is one; sages call it by various names." The whole universe is the projection of Brahman. He is both the material and efficient cause of

the universe. He has not made it (in the manner of a potter or a goldsmith) out of a material that existed beside himself, but He has manifested himself in the form of the universe. Since He is one without a second, nothing could exist where He was not. Hence, the Hindus say, creation is eternal. They do not recognize the beginning of creation, because "beginning" means coming into existence of something that did not exist before. They believe in cycles, i.e., the projection of the universe out of Brahman, its existence in the manifested form for a length of time, and its dissolution into Brahman again and infinite repetitions of this process. In admitting the beginning of creation there would be a great fallacy. In the first place, that would make Brahman cruel and partial. Because "beginning of creation" means beginning of Karma. Why did He create Karma that binds us and subjects us to all sorts of sorrows and sufferings? Why in His reign should there be inequalities and iniquities? The Vedas say Karma is eternal. It eternally rests in Brahman. In the dissolution, Karma remains in seed-form; in the projection, it sprouts up and bears fruits. If Karma is eternal, is there, then, no escape from it? Yes! By knowing Brahman we can escape the clutches of Karma. Knowledge is the only means to get out of Karma. In the second place, beginning of creation would make Brahman limited. What would He create if He is the only entity that exists? Why should He have desire for creation? He is full and perfect. He wants nothing. If He should want anything He would no longer be infinite and free, but bound and limited. The Vedānta solves the problem in this way. It says the universe is projected from Brahman and is dissolved into Him without any desire or conscious effort on His part, as we inhale and

exhale without any voluntary effort whatsoever. There is a series of cycles without beginning and without end.

Brahman is characterized by *Sat*, *Chit*, and *Ananda*, i.e. He is Existence absolute, Knowledge absolute, and Bliss absolute. But the question naturally arises, 'If Brahman is existence, knowledge and bliss whence do all these evils (relativities and dualities) come? The Vedas declare there is no such thing as evil. It is ignorance, delusion, that makes us see evils. This delusion is an inscrutable and mysterious force resting in Brahman. It is beginningless in itself, but it has an end. With knowledge it ceases to exist, for the individual. The dispersion of this delusion or attainment of knowledge is the one great task in our life.

It may be further argued, if Brahman is sometimes manifested and sometimes unmanifested, then He is subject to change, and as such unreal. No. These are the different states of Brahman. As a snake is now moving and now motionless, but is the same snake all the time, so it is the same Brahman with different forms. The sea with waves and the sea without waves is still the same sea. The sum-total is constant and invariable. This, in brief, is the Vedic conception of creation and creator.

Besides the Vedas, the Hindus have a number of other Scriptures known as the *Smritis* and *Puranas*. The word 'Smritis' means 'things remembered.' They embody the traditional or immemorial laws and institutions handed down by eminent legislators. These laws and institutions are not eternal and universal. They change with the change of circumstances. They do not hold good for all ages and all countries. The ancient Hindu sages knew that human

same person. But could they ever doubt their own existence? If they could do that, if they could kill themselves as nonentities, they could be true unbelievers. By denying God and Soul and believing in a number of other things, they cannot pass for unfettered reasoners. They are just as superstitious as others. Moreover, it can be proved to them that as matter is indestructible and eternal they have also an eternal existence. If matter is the cause of life, intellect, thought, ego, etc., these must exist potentially in matter. Science has proved that whatever exists in the effect must have existence in the cause. If they argue that thought, consciousness, etc., are not the inherent properties of matter but are generated by the combination of certain material substances, as a chemical phenomenon is produced by the mixture of certain ingredients, still there must be the power or potentiality in those substances to produce that effect; for why does not the same chemical phenomenon occur by mixing any substances? Granted that this body and all its properties are the product of the combination of material ingredients, can it be impossible that those very particles of matter that compose this body may combine again in course of time, maybe once in a cycle or once in a number of cycles, and that they have done so myriads of times in the infinite past? The dice when cast fall in a certain arrangement, and as the same arrangement recurs as we go on casting them again and again, so these very elements that constitute the body and its properties may combine again and again and produce this very body, mind, consciousness, etc. In this way it can be shown to the extreme materialist from his own standpoint that even if he is nothing but a product of matter, he is still eternal and indestructible. He exists in some

form or other in the infinite mass of matter. Another proof of the existence of the embodied soul is that no one can say "I am not." Let us see what is this "I" in us. Certainly it is not this body, for I say "It is my body." Similarly it is not the mind. This "I" or ego is constantly at the back of all thoughts and sensations. Again in deep sleep or trance we forget all idea about the body, yet we live. Mind, memory, understanding, all change; but this sense of "I" or ego does not. It is the eternal witness, permanent background behind all physical and mental changes. This ego or self is the last entity that remains. If matter is the cause of life, death will be impossible; for matter or the body remains after it, yet we are pronounced dead. This life is the reflection of the soul. When the soul leaves this body life also goes with it. "In the absence of the cause, the effect also disappears."

Thus we have seen how weak and untenable is the position of the materialist when he denies the pre-existence and immortality of the soul. Again, as we have already shown, if he cannot escape from believing in something, is it not wiser for him to believe in an entity that is less transient and less changeable than matter? If there really exists an entity like soul, then by denying it wilfully he endangers his destiny and makes himself a loser while still in the body, while the believer in the soul, even if it does not exist after death loses nothing in the end. This system of Charvaka was practical rather than metaphysical, preaching utilitarianism in its outspoken way. God and soul had no room in this system of philosophy.

Now let us see what the Buddhistic idea of the soul is. According to the Buddhists there is no permanent soul. Our

individual soul has a momentary existence only. We have come out of nothing and the complete cessation of this life is the highest bliss. Our existence is like an unbroken stream of feelings and consciousnesses, changing every moment. They do not admit the existence of a permanent entity behind these momentary perceptions. As a river continuously changes—the river of this moment is not the river of the previous moment, nor will it be the same river again the next moment—so we are also continually changing. The “I” of the present moment is not the same “I” that existed in the past or will exist in the future. The sum-total of the various existences or changes is our life. Again they say that this life (or soul if anyone calls it so) is like the circle of light which is produced in the air by swinging a torch continually round. As there is no real or permanent circle of light in the air, so there is no permanent soul. The whole stretch of existence through various experiences in various forms of life is the “soul” according to Buddha. This is known as the doctrine of emptiness or momentary existence. It denies both God, as the Creator or Ruler of the universe, and soul as an eternal entity. The Jainas, like the Buddhists, do not believe in God, but unlike them they admit a continuing soul.

Next let us consider the doctrine of Kapila, the reputed author of the Sankhya Philosophy. Kapila did not believe in a God as Creator of the world. He argued that the existence of such a God cannot be proved by any Pramana (means of knowledge). There may be a free Purusha (Muktatma) in charge of a cycle but no free God as the Creator and eternal Ruler of the universe. If God is free, He cannot create. Why should He create? Creation means

an action preceded by thought or desire, which again means lack of perfection. And a God who is not perfect himself is not free. Conversely, if He creates He cannot be a free God. Kapila was a strict reasoner and he never shrank from the consequences of his theory of Atheism. He was bold and straightforward, a lover of truth and rectitude, and would not accept anything that could not be established by reason and revelation. He was not a sworn disbeliever in God; but he saw no necessity of imagining or admitting a God as Creator of the universe, when Prakriti (Nature) was enough to account for creation. Nature, according to Kapila, is the material cause, and Purusha (soul) the efficient cause of the universe. Soul is omnipresent, perceptive and many. Here he differs from the Vedānta, which holds that the soul is one and secondless. How can the omnipresent soul be many? That which is omnipresent must be one and infinite. To this the Sāṅkhyas reply; soul is one in the sense that it is of one kind and not in the sense that it is secondless. As there may be hundreds of lamps in a room and each one lights without interfering with the others, so each soul is effulgent and omnipresent without hindering others. Like the lights of the lamps the lights of the souls interpenetrate one another. Again if the soul is secondless, why does not the happiness or misery of one affect the rest? Why by the liberation of one do not others also become liberated? Why is this variety then? Prakriti (Nature) exists, they say, to help the soul in achieving its freedom. As a dancing girl, after beguiling and pleasing the spectators with her performance, retires from the stage, so Prakriti also vanishes as soon as the soul has achieved its freedom from her charms and fetters. The relation between Purusha and Prakriti is illus-

say, for three or four sentences. The whole essence of those sentences is compressed into that one word. That one word is therefore very sacred and valuable to him. He repeats it and thinks of its meaning and thus saves a good deal of time and strain. The image worship and the symbol worship show the artistic and economic side of the Hindu mind. These images and forms are the perfections of Hindu art. Of course nowadays one may find caricatures, distortions, and abuses of these images, but these are due more to the degeneration of Hindu art for want of cultivation and encouragement than to the fault of the Hindu conception of idol worship. Idol worship or symbol worship is not at fault at all; the men into whose hands it has fallen are altogether responsible for these misrepresentations and misinterpretations.

To the Hindus religion is a practical thing. It is a matter of life, a matter of realization, with them. As, in the moral world, laws are necessary as means to enable us to go beyond laws, so in the religious world symbols, emblems and images are necessary as means to reach the end of realization. No amount of laws can make a people moral and good unless they feel from their heart the need of being moral and good. The government is making so many laws, the society so many restrictions, but why are the people still immoral, still vicious? The secret of making a people moral does not necessarily lie in enforcing external laws, but in changing their habits by awakening in them the sense of a dignified manliness. Unless and until they can be roused to that sense of dignity and self-respect, there can be no true morality for them. This is the Hindu idea of morality, to go beyond laws through laws. The Hindu does not like the idea of being kept down by a whip or by fear of punish-

ment. He believes in natural growth and unfoldment. According to him, unless a man thinks that he is part of God, that he is pure and perfect by nature, he cannot be truly moral. Liberty is the condition of growth. Give liberty, give good suggestions, and everything will turn right. If we really want to make a man moral we must rouse this lofty consciousness in him, we must suggest to him that he is not sinful, or vicious, but he is pure and perfect—made in the image of God. The Hindu always sees divinity in man. He loves all men as gods on earth. He hates none, he injures none. His whole struggle in life is to feel and live religion, and to help others to realize this ideal of religion.

Whenever there is any extraordinary manifestation of prowess, valor, skill, purity or love, the Hindu worships it as God. He worships Rama, he worships Krishna, he worships Buddha, Jesus, Moses and Mohammad; He adores Vyasa, Kapila, Socrates, Plato and Kant. He admires the genius of Sankara, Kalidas, Shakespeare, Newton, Faraday, Galileo and Marconi. He sees the manifestation of the absolute Brahman in all these masters, prophets, philosophers, poets and scientists. He knows that holiness, purity and perfection are not the exclusive possession of a country or nation. Wherever and whenever there is any necessity for them, they manifest themselves through a personality.

The Hindu teachers have taught four principle ways of attaining to God; by knowledge, by devotion, by unselfish work and by meditation. Those who take up the way of knowledge practice discrimination and dispassion. They always believe that the universe is unreal and Brahman or God alone is real; and according to them, becoming one with Brahman is the highest freedom, greatest bliss. Those who

choose the path of devotion worship God in some form, either as an incarnation or a teacher or a hero or the Lord of the universe. They establish some relation with their God and through intense love they try to reach Him. They call Him father, mother, Lord, or friend or by any other affectionate name, and think Him as the nearest and dearest to them. They give up everything in the world in their devotion to Him. The unselfish workers look upon work as the be-all and end-all of their life. They do not even care for their own salvation. They are ready to serve humanity at the cost of their health and wealth and life. They forget all selfish considerations in their sympathy for humanity. The way of meditation consists of the eight-fold practice, like posture, breathing, concentration, attention, etc. Those who follow this way observe some restrictions of food, habitation and action. They are very moderate in everything. The Hindus look upon these paths as so many radii of a circle. They start from different places but all converge upon the same centre. Sri Krishna, the great harmonizer of creeds, practised in his own life all these methods and declared: "Through whatever way men follow me I reach them in that way. They are all coming unto me (knowingly or unknowingly)." As the sun is the one great source of heat and light, so the one, infinite God is the source of all love and knowledge.

Hinduism is thus the great synthesis of religions. Within its wide arms all the creeds and faiths of the world are embraced. It excludes none, but harmonizes all, sympathizes with all. The one thing that it avoids is sectarianism, bigotry and insincerity. Its watchword is "peace and not fight, love and not hatred, co-operation and not disintegration." Univer-

sality and practicality are its chief features. It shows the ways to material, moral, intellectual and spiritual advancement. It lays down special duties of life and the methods of fulfillment of those duties. It wants us to be strong and straightforward, loving and energetic, pure and sincere. Its goal is freedom or self-realization.

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The first number of the second volume of the Vedanta Darpana will be issued in January 1932. We request our present subscribers to renew their subscriptions at their earliest convenience, and also wish our future subscribers to send their names and addresses together with their subscriptions as soon as they can, so that we may register their names on our mailing list.

Through the generous support of friends, well-wishers and members of the Vedanta Society, and contributions of subscribers, the Vedanta Darpana has been a success during the first year of its existence. We hope the second year also will be equally successful.—Editor.

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REPORT

Swami Dayananda who had been in charge of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco for the last five years, arrived in New York on September 13th on his way to India. He stayed with us two weeks and gave us much pleasure during that time. From New York he went to Washington, D. C. and thence to Providence, R. I. He returned to New York on October 7th and sailed by S. S. Bremen on October 9th. We wish him a safe and pleasant voyage.

Swami Nikhilananda arrived from India on October

th. His visit with us was short but most significant and inspiring. We heartily enjoyed his message from India. For the present he will assist Swami Akhilananda at the Vedanta Society of Providence. Later they will proceed to Washington, D. C., to found a new Vedanta Society.

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CASTE IN INDIA

By Swami Bodhananda

Caste is a social custom in India. In its general scope and utility it is based upon the principle of division of labor. The Aryans, before their migration to this historic land, lived a sort of nomadic life in the north. After they had become settled in their new home they organized a social polity and were divided into four sections, or castes, on the principle of division of labor. To each of these sections were assigned special duties. The Brahman caste was held responsible for the maintenance of learning, religion and morality, and for the teaching of whatever was valuable in those days, as an element of culture or discipline to the other three castes. The Kshatriya was responsible for the maintenance of peace and order in society and for the achievement of all such progress as depended upon war and upon the due exercise of political authority. The agricultural and commercial duties were assigned to the Vaishya. The Sudra was the common assistant to the first three classes.

There were restrictions placed upon the life of all these castes. The works for which the Brahmanical as well as the other three castes were made responsible, were all intended to serve the common good of the community as a whole. No one could utilize his power and position for class advantage or self-aggrandizement. The Brahman was religiously en-

joined to be always contented and to lead the life of simplicity and purity in preference to the life of luxury and plenty. The Kshatriya had to discard ease and pleasure and to be ever generous, so that all his wealth and power and heroic achievements should serve the good of the community of which he had become the guardian by birthright. The Vaishya was to cultivate the land, tend the cattle and carry on trade both at home and abroad for the common benefit of the whole body politic. The Sudra was to perform the duties of service for the general well-being of the whole society.

There is no doubt that some among these castes did violate the obligations of these wisely planned rules of life. But the original organization was well aimed and well adapted to serve the common good of the people as a whole. It was, furthermore, this composite nature of the stratified social life that made the unrestrained admixture of blood between the various castes unwholesome and undesirable, and led to the laying down of restrictions on intermarriages, in the interest of the good of the community in general. But though separated from one another by their social functions, these castes were all bound up together by a common religion. No caste was excluded from religious liberty and privileges. The Sudra had as much right to religious observances as the Brahman. No caste ever hated or condemned another by reason of social occupations. In fact they looked upon one another as important members in the constitution of the whole social organization—like parts of one great body—of which the Brahman was the head, the Kshatriya, the arms, the Vaishya the loins, and the Sudra the feet.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—o0o—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.

Vol. I

DECEMBER, 1931

No. 12

P R A Y E R S

If the entire Ocean be an inkpot and the material for ink be as huge as a mountain: A branch of the heavenly tree be the pen and the whole surface of the earth be the sheet of paper: If the scribe be none else than Sarada (the Divine Mother) and the time be the entire eternity. Even then O Lord! Thy innumerable good qualities cannot be fully described.

Here is Thy good, here is Thy evil; Here is Thy virtue, here is Thy vice; Here is Thy prosperity, here is Thy poverty; Here is Thy praise, Here is Thy blame. Dispose of them as Thou wilt O Mother! But grant me Thy Shuddha Bhakti (pure Love.)

* * * * *

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

on

Conditions Favorable for Devotional Exercises.

At the beginning one should try to concentrate one's mind in a lonely place; otherwise the mind may be distracted by many things. If we keep milk and water together, they are sure to get mixed; but butter, instead of getting itself mixed with water, will float upon it. So when by long practice a man has brought his mind under his control he can constantly meditate upon God, whether he be in a lonely place or not.

In the first stage of one's spiritual life one should try to concentrate one's mind by going into solitude to meditate upon Him; when by constant practice the mind has been brought under control, one can meditate anywhere one chooses. A young plant requires to be protected with care by a fence, or else goats and cows will eat it up; but when the same plant grows into a large tree with a stout stem, the cows or goats tied to it will not injure it.

The quality of forbearance is of the highest importance to every man. He alone is not destroyed who possesses this quality. In the Bengali alphabet no other letter occurs in three different forms except *Sha*. The three forms *Sha*, *Sah* and *Sa*: all mean the same viz., forbear.

SELECTIONS

From

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S TEACHINGS

Blessed are we that we are given the privilege of working for Him, not helping Him. Cut out this word "help" from your mind . . . You worship. When you give a morsel of food to the dog, you worship the dog as God. God is in that dog . . . He is all in all. You are allowed to worship Him. Stand in that reverent attitude to the whole universe . . . This is the proper attitude of work. This is the secret taught by Karma Yoga.

. . .

I see there are some poor, because it is for my salvation. I will go and worship them. God is there. Some here are miserable for your and my salvation, so that we may serve the Lord, coming in the shape of the diseased, coming in the shape of the lunatic, the leper and the sinner.

. . .

He who sees Siva in the poor, in the weak and in the diseased, really worships Siva; and if he sees Siva only in the image, his worship is preliminary. With him who has served and helped one poor man seeing Siva in him, without thinking of his caste or creed or race or anything, Siva is more pleased than with that man who sees Him only in temples.

. . .

None lives but who feels for the poor, the ignorant, the down-trodden. Feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad. Then will come help, power and indomitable energy.

. . .

I bequeath to you this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL

By the Editor

The third and last gift that Nachiketas asked Yama for his boon, was to be enlightened upon the existence of the soul. "Some say that the soul exists after death; others, that it does not; tell me, O God of death, the truth about this." And Yama replied, "The (individual) souls go to a higher or lower state of existence after death according to their merits or demerits." By this Yama meant that the soul is immortal and that it migrates from one body to another until it attains liberation.

No one will accept this doctrine nowadays without proof. Many psychical societies are deeply occupied with the demonstration of this problem; but instead of throwing any light upon it, they have made it more complicated, mysterious and ridiculous. They have shown by many supernatural phenomena that the spirit or subtle body continues to exist after the death of the gross body. Under the sledge-hammer blows of scientific investigation, however, all such proofs have been smashed into pieces, like clay balls. Most of their quasi-scientific demonstrations have been seriously doubted and discredited. Science will not accept anything except on competent evidence. It relies very little on hypothesis or personal authority. It wants hard and stern facts and is too cautious to be deceived by hoaxes or appearances. In this it is in perfect accord with the Vedanta. The Vedanta tells us to take nothing on assumption; nor does it urge us to be content with mere belief in a theory but to follow it out and realize it practically. It is superstition, it says, to believe in a doctrine or theory or anything without being

convinced of its truth and reality. Its method of demonstration is altogether different from that of others.

The soul is not a material entity and its existence cannot be proved by any material means. "Mind and reason cannot reach there; the sun, the moon cannot illumine it," how then can language and material instruments explain or demonstrate it? That which is beyond time, space and causation cannot be expressed in terms of matter. Therefore the highest proof of the existence of the soul, according to the Vedanta, is seeing it, feeling it, being it, or becoming one with it. Even intellectual conviction does not satisfy the Vedantist. He wants to transcend intellect. Intellect to him is a poor, frail instrument. He knows full well that the evidence of the senses is false and erroneous; whatever is proved today is disproved tomorrow. The verification by actual realization is the only proof, sound and unshakable. The evidence of the senses will fail, intellectual conviction also will change; but this super-sensuous or transcendental realization is immutable and invulnerable. "The fetters of the heart are broken, all doubts are solved, exhausted are all his works, when He (the Soul) has been beheld, who is both high and low (all-pervading)."

Side by side with this mighty system of Vedanta there arose a class of rationalistic and sceptical thinkers who not only doubted its fundamental doctrine but charged it with fraudulence and falsehood, and endeavored to blow it from off the face of the earth. But all such attempts have been vain as they must be, and the Vedanta lives to this day with all its grandeur and greatness; while all other systems have failed or fallen, it stands as whole and sound as ever. Its survival proves its internal strength. As darkness exists

to enhance the value of light, so all those heterodox systems came into being to magnify the glory of the Vedānta by their contrast.

I propose to give a brief survey of the different views of the soul according to different schools. First of all I will discuss the doctrine of the *Charvākas*. These were a class of sensualistic philosophers who did not believe in anything that could not be perceived by the senses. Of the five gross elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether) they admitted the first four only. Ether being invisible, they would not believe in it. Intellect and consciousness, according to them, are the products of the flesh. As the power of intoxication can be produced by mixing certain ingredients which by themselves are not intoxicating, so consciousness is produced from the combination of dead and insentient substances. Sensual enjoyment they held as the highest ideal of human life. They accepted pain simply as an inevitable concomitant of pleasure. There are thorns, they would argue, on the stem of a rose, there are husks on the paddy corn, but that does not prevent any sensible man from having the rose or the corn for his own enjoyment. They would avoid pain as unsubstantial and enjoy pleasure as a positive good. They condemned the Veda and its ceremonials. Death, according to them, is the end of all things. "Beg or borrow, live a comfortable life"; this was their creed. It is no wonder that its followers would deny the existence of God and Soul. And how could they believe in reason, if they denied all things that are imperceptible by the senses? Reason cannot be perceived by the senses nor should its conclusions be depended upon. For it often happens that what has been concluded by one is disproved by another, sometimes by that

mind always adapts itself to environment. What is good under a peculiar condition may not be good under a different condition. So they laid down special laws suited to the special social conditions of a certain epoch. These Smritis are recognized as true in so far as they do not conflict with the Vedas. If any part of them differs from the Vedas, that part is rejected. So we see these Scriptures have no eternal values. They change in every stage of social evolution, and as such have a social and temporary value only. The Puranas comprise the whole body of Hindu mythology;—ancient history, legends, traditions, symbols, etc.

Thus we see that the Scriptures of the Hindus are divided into philosophy, ritual and mythology. The philosophic portion is based upon the Vedas, the ritualistic portion is embodied in the Smritis, and the mythological portion in the Puranas. These divisions show the deep insight of the Hindu teachers into the various tendencies and dispositions of human mind, and the various conditions through which a human society evolves. For each stage of evolution they prescribed special laws and institutions. As one dish cannot suit the tastes of all persons, so one mode of thought or religion cannot suit the tastes of the whole human race. Different individuals must have different creeds, according to their individual nature, tendencies and capacities. The Hindus at a very ancient time discovered that all religions lead to the same goal. The Hindu child is taught to chant in his daily hymn: "As the different streams rising from different sources all flow into the sea, so, O Lord, thou art the one goal for the different paths of religion that men follow through different inclinations."

In a Hindu family each member may have his own creed. The man may be an Advaitist (monist), the wife a Dvaitist (dualist), and the son or daughter a Vishistadvaitist (qualified monist). They never quarrel because of their difference of creed. They know that purity or sincerity of heart is the only thing necessary to attain to knowledge or to see God. God is omniscient and all-merciful. He looks through our heart. He resides in our heart. If the heart is pure, if it is full of devotion and love, He is sure to come to us. He does not care for external forms of worship. Call Him father or mother, friend or master, it makes no difference to Him. The Hindus are thus wonderfully tolerant and liberal in matters of faith. They know that we, every one of us, are children of God and are sure to reach Him sooner or later. Every individual has started from God and is sure to end the journey in God. From the highest flight of Vedantic monism down to the grossest form of fetishism and materialism, each one has a place in the Religion of the Hindus. They know that different methods are necessary for various individual conditions. From the perfected man down to the smallest worm, each one is a manifestation of Brahman. The difference lies in degree and not in kind. The one thread runs through the whole string of manifestations.

Their philosophy says that in nature there are three elements, *satva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The characteristic of *satva* is illumination, of *rajas*, activity and of *tamas*, darkness. The whole range of creation is comprised in these elements. Every individual is struggling to manifest himself, to perfect himself. This is the Hindu idea of Evolution. In every individual there is soul which by its nature is pure and luminous but covered by the veil of nature. The whole struggle is to

VEDANTA DARPANA

break through this veil. Absolutely there is no difference between individuals. Each one will attain perfection sooner or later. Taking his stand on this broad principle or synthesis, the Hindu says even the atheist or the nihilist or the materialist is not without religion. The materialist believes in matter as a permanent reality. The Deist believes in God. Both believe in something. That man is a real nihilist who does not believe even in himself, in his judgment, reasoning, etc. But he believes his conclusions are true and infallible which is the result of his own judgment, which again is the product of the consciousness of his Self or Ego. Why should he not allow another man to believe in his own consciousness when it tells him that there is an entity like God or Brahman or Soul? The materialist or the atheist is as much a believer in some permanent entity as the Theist or the Deist. The Hindu calls that man nihilist who can deny his own existence, which is impossible. For by what will he deny himself? The sense of ego permeates all his actions and thoughts. So according to the Hindu the term nihilist is a misnomer in the sense of an unbeliever. This ego is a permanent quantity.

The Hindu conception of theism is based upon the belief in an eternal entity: Call him by any name—God or nature or reason or soul. Nomenclature does not matter in the least. The Hindu Scriptures emphatically say God is personal and impersonal and beyond them all. He is with name and form if you choose to think Him so: He is without name and form if you call Him so. Name and form are mere designations, limitations. He is the absolute existence, the permanent basis, the noumenon behind all changes, all manifestations and all phenomena.

Now a word about Hindu image worship or symbol worship or idolatry. The Hindu is never a worshipper of idols, but he worships an ideal. In his idol he sees the representation of his ideal. His idols are never awkward or ugly. They are very beautiful and attractive. They call their idols Devas or Devis (bright and beautiful ones). They do not look upon them as made of stone or clay or wood, but they always see their highest ideals manifested in them. They worship these images with love and devotion and ascribe to them all the divine qualities, such as all-powerfulness, omnipresence, omniscience. They regard them as spiritual helpers, and practice concentration on those divine images. In their temples one will always find a holy association, a holy vibration, a holy atmosphere.

We, every one of us, are more or less image-worshippers. Some worship a mental image, some a material image. The one internal and the other external, or the one abstract, the other concrete. The Hindu knows that our mind is always scattered on external objects. He gathers together that scattered mind and fixes it on an external object first, which is very attractive and beautiful, and gradually concentrates it on an internal image or object or quality. His idea is to go from the concrete to the abstract and from the abstract to the absolute. His process is gradual and steady; because a violent process always produces a nervous shock. When he has been able to concentrate on an external image which to him is very lovely and holy, he proceeds slowly and concentrates on the absolute which is super-consciousness. This is the object of image-worship. Now, he uses some words in his worship which also represent an idea. In these short words he puts a large sense. He uses one word,

trated by this simile: Purusha is a lame man who cannot walk, and Prakriti a blind woman who cannot see and cannot go from place to place without someone to guide her. When they meet, the lame Purusha gets on the shoulders of the blind Prakriti and leads her to his destination. So each is dependent upon the other; without the help of the one the other cannot act. Since Kapila believed in the Vedas, though in a very much qualified form, his philosophy is not regarded as unorthodox. He agreed with the Vedanta in admitting the omnipresence of the soul and the authority of the Vedas, and with the Buddhists in denying God; but he differed from both again respectively in holding the multiplicity of souls and in accepting a permanent soul. Both Kapila's and Buddha's philosophy are more or less pessimistic inasmuch as according to both the world is full of misery, the cessation of which misery is the highest end of life.

The Yoga Philosophy is a supplement of the Sankhya. The only difference between them is that the former believes in an eternally free and omniscient God as ruler of the Universe. Like the Sankhya, Yoga holds the doctrine of multiplicity of souls. The merging of the individual into the Universal by Samadhi, or the union of Jivatman and Paramatman by the eight-fold practice is the highest liberation according to Yoga.

Now I will briefly state the view of Vedanta in regard to the soul. The Vedanta declares that the soul is self-evident and self-luminous, like the sun. As a cloud hides the sun for a short time only, so Avidya (Nescience) veils the effulgent soul. Remove this veil and it will shine in all its glory and grandeur. The soul alone exists and noth-

ing else. It is not the body nor the mind, for these decay and die, but soul does not. Body, mind, intellect, memory and all are products of matter and fostered by food. The soul is quite distinct from these. It is immutable, unchangeable, birthless, deathless. The whole universe is pervaded by it. Beyond time and space, name and form, mind and reason, eternal, infinite, sexless, secondless, blessed and glorious is this soul. Knowing it as such one becomes free and immortal.

But the question may still arise, if the soul is self-luminous and omnipresent why do we not always feel and see it? If it is immortal and all-knowing why do we not know our experiences in previous lives and what we shall be in the future? To this the Vedanta replies, the soul is omnipresent not as matter but as spirit. We can see or feel a material substance, for it has form and is limited; soul being formless and limitless cannot be perceived by the senses, the ordinary channels of evidential knowledge. If we can transcend the senses we can realize the true nature of the soul. So long as we have the idea of this phenomenal world we cannot have any knowledge of the absolute reality. The soul is all-pervading and effulgent, but is not affected by the qualities of the pervaded. The sun's light illumines all things of the world, great and small, good and bad, yet it remains always unaffected by them. The soul is ever-present in us but we are not conscious of it. It does not degenerate into our ordinary knowledge.

We cannot remember our experiences when we were little children; nay, we cannot tell exactly what we did or thought even yesterday. If it is so difficult to remember the experiences of this life, how difficult it must be to remember those

of our past lives. Moreover memory is a function of the brain. The brain that we have now is not the same as we had in previous incarnations. So memory is not the proof of our pre-existence. Some mystic Yogins claim that they can tell all about their past and future by certain Yoga powers. The Vedantists say that we had better spend our time and thought in acquiring strength to realize the soul than in developing the power to tell what we were before and what we shall be hereafter.

Some people hold that the soul is always progressing, it never retrogrades. As in this life we grow from childhood into boyhood and from boyhood into manhood, the individual soul also develops by the process of evolution from a lower into a higher state. There can be no backward movement in the course of the soul's evolution. To this we may say that we do not actually see that the mind and the intellect always grow; for in old age our intellect declines and our memory fails. When there is no steady gradual growth even in the course of one life how can there be eternal progress in the course of evolution? Again the soul is unchangeable and infinite and as such it is full and non-active. It has neither birth or growth, nor decay or death. The *Sukshma Sharira* (subtle body) passes from one body to another. It carries away with it all the *Samaskaras* (impressions) of the past existence when one gross body dies, and takes another that accords well with it for the manifestation of the character and tendencies it has acquired by its actions in the previous incarnations.

Another proof of the pre-existence of the soul is the inherent fear of death in every creature. One may say we are

afraid of death because we see so much suffering at the time of death in others. But why does a new-born child who has no experience of the world, or a lower animal also, fear death? The rational explanation is that we have died so many times in the past that the fear of death has become almost an innate instinct in us.

The existence and immortality of the soul may be proved in many other ways, but none of them will be so forceful, rational and convincing as the one shown by Sri Krishna in the Gita. "As casting off worn-out clothes one takes others that are new, so does the body-owning soul give up worn-out bodies and pass into others that are new." "In the body of all beings is this soul indestructible and immortal. Knowing it as such no one should mourn." To realize this soul we must be pure and sincere, brave and active and devoted to truth alone. "Realize the soul and leave off everything else," says the Upanishad. We are that soul, we are spirit immortal. We are life, we are light. The only verification of this is realization, is being and becoming. "He is the Reality of the real, Life of the living, the unity in variety, the eternal Seer. Realizing Him as Soul one becomes free from all bonds."

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. What is the attitude of the Hindu towards Christianity?

A. The Orthodox Hindu is rather indifferent to it. His indifference is not due to his ignorance of it or his prejudice against it. He gives credit to its followers for the good they have done to mankind. He also knows the harm they

have done to the world. But this good or harm cannot be attributed to the religion, but to the individual. It would have been done with or without the religion. He holds the man responsible for what he does, and not the religion he professes. This is his attitude towards all religions including his own.

Q. Is the word Christ an adaptation of the word Krishna or Krista, as the Hindus ordinarily pronounce it?

A. The word Christ comes directly from the Greek word *Christus* which means "anointed." Of course the word Krishna is not a proper name. It is a title or designation like the word Buddha. Krishna means literally the "attractive one." Although the Sanskrit word Krishna antedates the Greek word *Christus*, it is hard to tell from a remote similarity of sound and sense whether the latter is an adaptation of the former. But if there are scholars who take that view they can do so.

Q. If the Gita is not a part of the Upanishads, why are the lessons at the end of each chapter called Upanishads?

A. The original meaning of the word "*upanishad*" is knowledge obtained directly from the teacher. In the Gita, *Brahma Vidya* (knowledge of Brahman) has been taught Arjuna by Krishna in a dialogic form. For that reason the lessons are virtually as full of wisdom and as authoritative as the teachings of the Upanishads. It is, therefore, not in a mere eulogistic sense that the teachings of the Gita are called Upanishads, but in the original sense of the word "*upanishad*" itself.

REPORT

Swami Nikhilananda made us a short visit in the last week of October. He came to New York primarily to meet a Hindu friend who, after passing his I. C. S. Examination in England, arrived in New York on his way to India via the U. S. A. and Japan. We had the great pleasure of having both Swami Nikhilananda and Sriyut T. Iyengar with us as our guests, even for a short time.

At the request of Swami Bodhananda, Swami Nikhilananda preached a sermon on "Vedanta and World Peace," Sunday morning, November 1st. The congregation was delighted with the Swami's most scholarly exposition of the subject.

He gave a survey of the efforts of various leaders in the cause of Peace belonging to different periods of history down to our own time, and their achievements, and concluded by saying that if ever the great ideal of world peace be realized it must be through the spiritual realization of the oneness of Life as taught by the Vedas: "Ekam Sat; Viprah Vahudha Vadanti." That which exists is one. Sages call it variously.

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NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

The first number of the second volume of the Vedanta Darpana will be issued in January 1932. We request our present subscribers to renew their subscriptions at their earliest convenience, and also wish our future subscribers to send their names and addresses together with their subscriptions as soon as they can, so that we may register their names on our mailing list.—Editor.





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